

DIALOGUES WITH THE GURU

2782

2782

Q:26 x
H 5

Q.126.2
L2

1417

rahaswa
mi)
the

9496

41

[illegible]

मुमुक्षु भवन वेद वेदाङ्ग पुस्तकालय, वाराणसी ।

DIALOGUES WITH THE GURU



DIALOGUES WITH THE GURU

Talks with His Holiness
Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah
late Sankaracharya of Sringeri Mutt

Compiled by
R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR
(Now Sri Jnanananda Bharati Swaminah)

With an Introduction by
PAUL MASSON OURSEL
Director of Studies
at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes
University of Paris

CHETANA



BOMBAY

Q: 2. 6x
HB

❀ मुमुक्षु भवन वेद वेदाङ्ग पुस्तकालय ❀	
वाराणसी ।	
आगत क्रमांक.....	1417.....
दिनांक.....	25/11/80.....

Printed at Skylark Printers, 11355, Id-Gah Road, New Delhi-110055

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

More than fifteen years ago our esteemed friend, Sri David MacIver, drew our attention to a slim book in unpretentious get-up published in Madras a few years earlier. It was entitled "From the Master's Lips". We found the book to be a feast of reason and a flow of soul. The conversations of the sage, inspite of their varied contents, had a unity throughout created by his spiritual and tolerant outlook on life. We felt that the work deserved a much wider readership than it had received till then. We lost no time in obtaining the permission of the learned author for publishing the book ourselves under the title **Dialogues with the Guru**. And our expectations about the book were not belied as this is the third edition after we took up its publication.

The conversations recorded in **Dialogues with the Guru** are not reported verbatim. The author happened to be the interpreter in the conversation reported in chapter I and he was an interested listener whenever he was not an actual participant. There can be no doubt about the authenticity of the contents.

As it was not possible to obtain His Holiness' assent to the publication, the author did the next best thing. He obtained the approval of His Holiness' Sarvadhikari, Sri N. Sri-kanta Sastry, who was managing the Mutt for over forty years and had been in close contact with His Holiness during all this period. The approval was given in the form of a foreward in Sanskrit which was prefixed to the Madras edition of the book and also the Tamil edition. We include it in this edition along with its translation in English.

Sri R. Krishnaswami Aiyar, who has compiled in this book the conversations with His Holiness, is a devoted disciple of Sringeri Muti and has had frequent opportunities of listening to and profiting by the teachings of His Holiness. He was born on the 26th October, 1889, as the eldest son of Sri G. Ramachandra Aiyar, a leading lawyer of the Tirunelveli Bar, who later took Sanyasa and was known as Sri Ramananda Saraswati Swaminah. Sri R. Krishnaswami Aiyar had his education in the Hindu College at Tirunelveli and in the Presidency College and the Law College at Madras. He joined the Tirunelveli Bar in 1912.

He retired from the legal profession in 1948 and in 1966 he obtained the gracious permission of His Holiness the present Acharya Swaminah of Sringeri, to become a Sanyasi. In November of that year, at Vrindavana on the banks of Yamuna and in the immediate presence of His Holiness, he had his initiation from Sri Sadasivendra Saraswati Swaminah of Vijaywada.

Sri R. Krishnaswami Aiyar, now known as Sri Jnanananda Bharati Swaminah, has written many books in Sanskrit, Tamil and English. Cogency of thought and clarity of expression have been his chief characteristics. Apart from *Dialogues with the Guru* we have published two more books written by him. These are "Outlines of Vedanta" and "The Great Equation". Paul Masson-Oursel describes *Dialogues with the Guru* as 'a two-voiced meditation'. The other two books show how the equation of the Self with the Brahman can be established.

S. DIKSHIT,
Publisher

SANSKRIT TEXT OF THE FOREWORD

॥ श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः ॥

तत्तादृक्प्रथितमहामहिमभूमिभिः मूर्तिमन्मेधाप्रतिभाभिः विद्वद्-
वृन्दविस्मापकपाण्डित्यवैखरीविराजमानैः शिष्टजनसंस्तूयमानसत्कर्म-
सदाचारपरायणैः श्रीशृङ्गिरिव्याख्यानभद्रपीठाधिपैः आचार्यप्राचार्यैः
छात्रलोकानुजिघृक्षया समादृतदेशाटनसमये, तत्र तत्र समागतान्
विनेयवरान् अभ्युदयनिश्श्रेयसपात्रमाधातुकामैः उपदिष्टान् परमार्थान्
यथामति सङ्गृह्य, माधुकरवृत्त्या तान् एकत्र संयोज्य, 'एकः स्वादु
न भुञ्जीत' इत्यभियुक्तोक्तिमनुसृत्य तिरस्कृतसुधामाधुर्यगर्वा
श्रीमदाचार्यमुखारविन्दविनिस्सृतां वाङ्मरन्दझरीं, भगवता महा-
विष्णुना संसाधितसुधास्वादनमिवामरवृन्दस्य परानप्यास्तिकसहो-
दरान् भोजयितुकामैः शालिवाटीपुरमधिवसद्भिः श्रीमत्कृष्णस्वामि-
शर्मभिः सुललितं सुसन्दर्भं सुगमं च गुरुशिष्य संवादरूपेण सङ्ग्रथ्य
संप्रेषितः प्रबन्धः मामतितरामानन्दयति स्म ॥

आजानसिद्धविनयविवेकादिगुणशालिभिः विशेषतो गुरुप्रसाद-
लब्धवैदिकश्रद्धासाधनैः ब्रह्मश्रिया विराजितैः कृष्णस्वामिशर्मभिः
साक्षादाचार्यमुखावाप्ततत्त्वार्थान् यथावत् संधार्य चित्ते, अनुचिन्त्य
वारं वारं, कृत्वा च यथासंभवमात्मोपयोगिनः परोपकारबुद्ध्या
ग्रन्थरूपेण लेखनप्रयत्नः योऽयमाचरितः, स तु सर्वजनश्लाघायाः पूरां
कोटिमावहतीत्यत्र न संदेहलेशोऽपीत्यावेदयति ॥

युववत्सरीयश्रावण-
कृष्णसप्तम्याम्,
नञ्जङ्गोडुपुरीतः

श्रीमदाचार्यकृपापात्रं तदनुगृहीत
सदाचारप्रवर्तनप्रवीणपदलाञ्छनः
श्रीकण्ठशास्त्री

TRANSLATION OF THE SANSKRIT TEXT IN FREE ENGLISH

His Holiness, who now presides over the Vyakhyana Peetha of Sringeri, has a spiritual grandeur of his own. His prodigious memory and flashes of intuitive wisdom are unsurpassed; his profound learning and lucid exposition of the Sastras keep the scholars spell-bound; his exemplary conduct is praised by all.

He gave insight into the Supreme truth to numerous seekers who met him during his recent tour, which he undertook to shower his blessings on the devotees. Sri Krishnaswami Aiyar of Tirunelveli has gathered these teachings just as a bee collects the honey from flowers. Lord Vishnu had distributed nectar to the assembly of gods. None should enjoy tasty food all by himself, but should share it with others. This compilation of dialogues between the Guru and the seekers has been prepared by the author with the same noble object in view. It contains the words that came from the mouth of the Guru, words comparable to nectar in their purity and sublimity.

Endowed with true humility and various other noble qualities, Sri Krishnaswami Aiyar has a deep and abiding faith in the way of life prescribed in the Vedas. He treasured in his memory the words that fell from the master's lips, thought over them and utilized them for his spiritual benefit. To share this benefit with others he has now compiled them in this book. Undoubtedly this noble endeavour of his will be praised by all.

Year Sravana, Krishna Saptami,
Nanjangud
(August 20, 1935)

—Srikanta Sastri

INTRODUCTION

Dialogues with the Guru is a two-voiced meditation on the attainment of deliverance in accordance with the purest Vedantic orthodoxy. In virtue of his ancestry as well as of his training in the Sastras, the author, R. Krishnaswami Aiyar, has made a faithful and judicious interpreter of the teaching of Sri Sankara's school. His aim is that the authentic truth shall not be forgotten in that territory where the Guru of gurus gave it form.

In the past, as in the present, gurus to comment the venerated texts have assuredly never been wanting. But here it is a question of showing how the highest truth can serve us in practical life, and how the concrete and multiple difficulties of the modern man, private and professional alike, are to be overcome by a wisdom which is not only classical but indeed immutable.

True in the absolute, Vedanta is no less so at the temporal level. Resolving abstract problems, it must correspondingly solve all the points of conscience that line the path of a man or woman from birth till death. Eternity is contemporary with all ages. And orthodoxy is presented here in terms of an integral 'eternalism'—an adequate presentation of the immutable truth as the condition of salvation, of deliverance, for all beings.

This manual, which places the purest traditional knowledge within the grasp of the most modern Hindu, should also be a matter of keen interest to India's Western friends, for it is dissemination of this kind alone that can prevent its civilization, with its so rich past and so rich future, from foundering in a chaotic humanism. May Sanatana Dharma guarantee the ever-livingness of the Indian soul!

PAUL MASSON-OURSSEL
Sorbonne, Paris

PREFACE

His Holiness Sri Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah, whose conversations provided the inspiration as well as the material for this book, was born of very noble but poor parents at Sringeri, on Sunday, October 16, 1892, and was in due course given the name of Narasimha Sastri. In his twelfth year he came under the benign influence of His Holiness Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati Swaminah, the then reigning Acharya of the Sringeri Mutt, who immediately had him admitted into the Mutt Pathasala. The great clearness of thought and expression which marked out the boy, no less than his exemplary character and simplicity, so impressed His Holiness that he was selected before long for a special course in Tarka and, later on, sent to the Bangalore Sanskara Mutt to study Mimamsa. His Holiness nominated him as his successor, and when he shuffled off his mortal coil in March, 1912, young Narasimha Sastri was duly given *sannyasa* and installed on the Pitha under the name of Chandrasekhara Bharati.

The new Acharya rigidly followed in the footsteps of his predecessor and in the course of about three years, under the able guidance of Mahamahopadhyaya Vidyānidhi Virupaksha Sastri, completed his studies in Vedānta also. His intense devotion to his Guru and the steady application and perseverance which characterised his efforts led him soon to a level of erudition and self-realization which evoked the admiration and reverence of all. His love was catholic and universal. High and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, Hindu and non-Hindu, sceptic and believer, all found in him a sincere friend and guide.

Many have been the incalculable benefits, spiritual and worldly, derived by those who had the good fortune of coming into contact with him. This is not the place to recount the numerous incidents in which he playfully showed his **mantric**, **yogic** and super-normal powers. Suffice it to say that he was the teacher *par excellence*. His words were few but very significant. Often a single word or even a slight gesture of his was potent enough to dispel a long-standing doubt. His method of leading to the highest truths from the simplest facts was unique and can be seen illustrated in this book. He did not believe in mass propaganda in religious matters, but only in individual effort as a means of raising the tone of society.

At the insistence of his disciples he toured extensively in South India, from 1923 to 1927, and after his return to Sringeri he began gradually to retire from the secular affairs of the Mutt and to engage himself almost entirely in contemplation. In 1931, he initiated Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha Swaminah, the present Acharya, and withdrew into himself, except on rare occasions when disciples were fortunate enough to see him emerge from his seclusion.

He stayed for some months at Bangalore and Kaladi, in 1939-40. After his return to Sringeri, his moods of abnormality increased in frequency and duration. He declined to come out even at the time of the **Sahasrachandi Homa**, in 1953, when thousands from all over India were anxiously hoping to have his **darsana**. Only the fortunate few who had a glimpse of him, albeit from a distance, during such periods, can have an idea of the spiritual, nay even physical, effulgence which enveloped him at those times and raised him above all mundane life. Not long after this great homa, however, he came out, resumed his

normal life and for months together gave darsana and blessings quite as he used to do of old. It may be mentioned that President Rajendra Prasad was among those who profited by them. A few days later, in the morning of Sunday, September 26, 1954, realizing that the momentum of karma which gave him this body had exhausted itself, this great Mahatma discarded it in the river Tunga and became one with the Absolute.

Such, in brief outline, was the outward life of the sage whose conversations I have tried to record in this book. The record is not *verbatim*, but I can vouch for the accuracy of its contents, for I happened to be myself the interpreter in the conversation recorded in chapter I and, as regards the others, I was an interested listener whenever I was not an actual participant. But since it was not possible to obtain His Holiness' assent to their publication, the responsibility for the book is entirely mine. It may be mentioned that while dealing with a particular topic, I have often taken the liberty of clubbing together the ideas expressed by His Holiness on that subject to different persons and on different occasions.

The conversations recorded here took place between the years 1925 and 1927, nearly 50 years ago. Since then we have had the advent of political freedom for India and the flood of social legislation that has followed in its wake. It may therefore seem to the present-day reader that some of the ideas in this book, especially chapter VI on Marriage Reform, are out of date. But it will be well to bear in mind that Dharma is never out of date, though it may be out of fashion. It is veritably an evil day when religion and society are at the mercy of politicians who are out to

imitate the West at all costs and to make the true Hindu a stranger in his own land.

There is ample material in this book from which a practical guide to conduct can be made out, if only we care to be guided rightly. And it is our devout hope and assurance that the memory, the blessings, the example and the words of His Holiness will serve to direct the steps of earnest aspirants in their march towards the realization of the goal of life.

This book was originally published many years ago, under the title *From the Master's Lips* and my esteemed friend Mr. David MacIver felt that the contents deserved a finer get-up and a much wider readership than it had so far received. Messrs. Chetana Ltd., of which he is a director, have kindly undertaken this publication, and I record my grateful thanks to them for the excellent way in which they have carried out the work. I am deeply indebted also to Professor Paul Masson-Oursel of the Sorbonne, Paris, for his kind and appreciative introduction.

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

CONTENTS

Publisher's Note	v
Foreword in Sanskrit by the Sarvadhikari of the Mutt	vii
Translation of Sanskrit text in free English ..	viii
Introduction	ix
Preface	xi
Chapter I. HINDUISM	1
1. The Universal Law. 2. Revelation. 3. Other Religions. 4. The Practical Guide	
Chapter II. MODERN EDUCATION.. ..	
1. The Wrong Attitude. 2. The Rationale of Activity. 3. Education and Wealth.	
Chapter III. THE MEANS OF HAPPINESS ..	31
1. Cause and Effect. 2. Happiness Caused. 3. Happiness Uncaused.	
Chapter IV. FATE AND FREE-WILL	44
1. A Futile Enquiry. 2. Fate a Guide to Conduct. 3. Function of the Sastras.	
Chapter V. THE LEGAL PROFESSION ..	57
1. A Training Ground. 2. Sharpening of the Intellect. 3. Need for Immediate Effort. 4. The Study of Sanskrit.	
Chapter VI. MARRIAGE REFORM	74
1. Bridegroom Price. 2. Early Marriage. 3. The Widow Problem. 4. The Real Remedy.	

Chapter VII. RELIGIOUS NEUTRALITY ..	89
1. A Contrast. 2. Toleration Misconceived.	
3. Equal Support for All. 4. Need for Secular Support.	
Chapter VIII. RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA ..	104
1. Ignorance no Excuse. 2. Duty to Learn.	
3. Teach by Example.	
Chapter IX. THE UTILITY OF GOD	119
1. The Prime Cause. 2. The Great Friend.	
Chapter X. THE SANDHYA WORSHIP ..	132
1. The Sun. 2. The Inner Realities.	
3. The Reconciliation.	
Chapter XI. TRUE DEVOTION	145
1. The Scope of Bhajana. 2. Name and Form.	
3. The Puranas Explained.	
Chapter XII. ADVAITA	160
1. A Matter for Realization. 2. Significance of the Name. 3. Distinctive Characteristic.	
4. Our Immediate Duty.	
Glossary of Sanskrit Words	175

CHAPTER I.

HINDUISM

1. THE UNIVERSAL LAW

WHEN His Holiness the Jagadguru was camping in a quiet village during the course of his tours, a European gentleman, Mr. A., came to see him. He seemed to have studied some popular books on Vedānta philosophy and felt attracted by its teachings.

A.: Swāmiji, may I know if you are prepared to take converts to your religion? Personally I find much worth in it and I have known very many friends who so love your philosophy and religion that they would like to call themselves Hindus, if that were possible.

H. H.: The Hindu system of philosophy and religion is bound to attract all thinking minds, but we do not take in converts.

A.: If you think that your system is an invaluable one and is bound to be useful to all mankind, does it not follow that you must be prepared to take in converts?

H. H.: Not necessarily. Conversion is possible or necessary only when the person who desires to be a convert does not already belong to the religion to which he desires to be converted.

A.: How is that? Do you mean to say that no formal conversion is necessary as those who desire to be Hindus are already Hindus by virtue of that desire itself?

H. H.: No. I mean that all are Hindus irrespective of their desire to be called Hindus.

A.: How can that be?

H. H.: Hinduism is the name which has now been given to our system, but its real name has always been Sanātana Dharma or the Eternal Law. It does not date from a particular point of time or begin from a particular founder. Being eternal, it is also universal. It knows no territorial jurisdiction. All beings born and to be born belong to it. They cannot escape this law, whether they concede its binding force or not. The eternal truth that fire burns does not depend for its validity upon our allegiance to it. If we accept that truth, so much the better for us. If we do not, so much the worse for us. In either case, the law is there, immutable, universal and eternal. Such is our Sanātana Dharma.

A.: If then the entire world is Hindu according to you, how do you justify the restrictive caste system?

H. H.: I only told you that all were Hindus and therefore entitled to seek guidance in the tenets of our religion. I did not say that the guidance will be the same for all. Countless are the varieties of temperament, training, environments, hereditary leanings, pre-natal tendencies and so on, so that it will be impossible to expect any single stereotyped system of

conduct for all. Our Dharma taking due notice of this undeniable fact resolves itself into two parts: 1. Sāmānya Dharma or Ordinary Law, and 2. Viśeṣha Dharma or Special Law. The former guides all mankind; the former and the latter both together guide those who come under the caste system.

A.: If the rules of caste have any spiritual value, why not give the benefit of them to those also who are outside it?

H. H.: If water is beneficial to a thirsty man, does it follow that it will be beneficial to a man who has fever and therefore feels thirsty?

A.: Your illustration is not fair. There is nothing to show that a special rule of conduct prescribed for a particular caste will be injurious to others, who do not belong to that caste or to any caste at all.

H. H.: On the other hand, you must realise that there is nothing to show that a special rule of conduct prescribed for a particular caste will be beneficial to others. For, the mere fact that it is prescribed for that caste makes it a special law and, therefore, not applicable to the generality of mankind. If the Śāstras are our only guide for telling us that a particular line of conduct is beneficial, we cannot throw them overboard when they tell us in the same breath for whom it is beneficial. Our system and, in fact, any system which aims at the regulation of conduct must be based on the principle of *adhikāra* or competency. Those who belong to the castes are competent to pursue the Viśeṣha Dharma; the others are competent to pursue only Sāmānya Dharma. Further, the nature of the

competency required can be learnt only from the Śāstras which prescribe the Dharma.

A.: If then the Hindu Śāstras are to be taken as the guide for all humanity and if all persons born are, in your view, born in your religion, how do you account for the prevalence of other faiths?

H. H.: It is their fault that they do not recognise that they are but aspects of the Sanātana Dharma. The highest teachings of any other religion do find a place in our religion and are but a phase of the ordinary law laid down there.

A.: Don't you think, Swāmiji, that your claim will sound somewhat over-high and that the others may not be disposed to concede it?

H. H.: The disposition of others to concede the claim of Hinduism is quite beside the point, for the intrinsic worth of anything is always there whether one recognises it or not. As for the claim being high, I desire to point out to you that I cannot possibly put it lower.

A.: How is that?

H. H.: Please bear with me if I take Christianity as an example to illustrate my point. If belief in the personality of Christ is a necessary condition of salvation, we must be prepared to say that all those persons who have lived before the time of Jesus have been denied the benefit of salvation for no fault of theirs and simply because they happened to be born when Jesus was yet unborn. The same reasoning would deny salvation to those who have lived even at the same time as Jesus or since that time, but may

not have even heard of him. Further, don't you think it very unfair on the part of God that He should suddenly wake up on a particular day and prescribe for all mankind a necessary condition of salvation? Did He forget that the people who had the misfortune to be born before Jesus, had souls to save? If He did not forget, did He take care to prescribe for them the means necessary to enable them to attain salvation? If He did so prescribe, His prescription could not possibly have included a belief in the Jesus to be born. Therefore the only logical hypothesis, which a reasonable man can accept, is that God, even when He created the first man (if there was such a time), Himself simultaneously promulgated also the means for his salvation, for even the first man was certainly in need of salvation. We accordingly say of our Vedas that they were co-eval with the first man (not in the sense that they were created together, for we believe that there was no first creation and that everything is beginningless, but in the sense that they were co-existing) and that they are the revelations of God Himself. Any religion which traces its origin from a later time, any time after creation, and from any teacher other than God, is bound to be imperfect and short-lived.

2. REVELATION

A.: I understand your point, but Swāmiji, you have made the assumption that man is not capable of finding out the means of salvation himself and that he requires somebody, be it God, to point them out to him.

H. H.: Before he can possibly find out the means, man must first know that there is something to be striven for. That there is such a something can be known by us only if somebody who partakes of that something, or has realised it in actual experience, informs us about its existence. This information coming from beyond the range of our experience is itself in the nature of a revelation. Further, how can one possibly know for certain that a particular course of conduct does lead to salvation, unless this is taught to us by somebody who has pursued that particular course and has attained salvation or by somebody who by his omniscience is able to visualise at the same time the pathway as well as the goal or by somebody who is the goal itself? In the first alternative, the question will arise, how did that somebody know before he entered on the course of conduct which he so successfully followed; in the second alternative also, the question, how did he attain such an omniscience will require an answer. Therefore, the third alternative, which traces all revelation to God Himself is the only logical hypothesis.

A.: Certainly we need no revelation to teach us that God exists. The means of knowing Him may be difficult to understand and some guidance may be necessary from those who have known Him. But the fact of God's existence does not require any revelation, for we can ourselves infer it by the aid of our reasoning faculty.

H. H.: If the existence of God is so patent a fact and so easily inferable, how do you account for atheists and agnostics in the world? Do you mean to say that their powers of intellect and capacity for

reasoning are in any way inferior to yours? On the other hand, you will find that the thinkers who have taken the trouble to think out the existence of God and failed are men of extraordinary intellect. Their failure to prove God is not due to any fault in their intellectual equipment, but to the fact that God is essentially uninferable. Further, assuming that by the aid of reasoning you can infer the existence of God, who told you that there is a God to be inferred? Certainly you depend upon some previous information for that knowledge. If somebody tells you that there is a God, you may try your reasoning powers at proving Him. If you have never heard of God at all, there is nothing to incite or awaken your powers of reasoning.

A.: It is not necessary that I should have heard of God before I exercise my reasoning faculty. The word God may not be before my mind; but a conception of something changeless and eternal, underlying this ever-changing, evanescent world naturally suggests itself to me as a matter of inference.

H. H.: How?

A.: It cannot be denied that the world is made up of opposites, light and darkness, activity and inertness, pain and pleasure, life and death, and so on. I infer from this that, inasmuch as there is change in the world, there must also be its opposite, a non-changing factor. Inasmuch as everything is dying every moment, I infer that there is a non-dying factor also. And so on. Thus, by mere inference I am able to postulate the existence of a single, homogeneous, eternal, unchanging Being as opposed to the many, heterogeneous, evanescent, changing beings.

H. H.: May I know what is the opposite of a horse? A horse is a positive object of perception. From its existence, you must be able to infer its opposite. What is that opposite? My question may seem somewhat crude but nevertheless requires an answer.

A.: Well then, Swāmiji, I shall say that the opposite of a horse is a 'non-horse'.

H. H.: Quite right. Is it a positive thing or is it a mere negation?

A.: Inasmuch as I have called it the opposite of a horse, I must say that it is a positive thing.

H. H.: Is it an animal or do you include in this conception everything else in the universe?

A.: Strictly speaking, I must include therein everything else in the universe for even a stone is a 'non-horse'. But ordinarily as the negation goes with 'horse', it is sufficient to negative the horseness alone; and so by a 'non-horse' is ordinarily meant an animal which is not a horse.

H. H.: That is, the conception of the opposite of a particular thing can only be of a thing akin to that thing but different from it in that particularity. In other words, there is no absolute opposite for anything in the world; the want of a particular characteristic in one thing which we find in another makes us think that they are the opposites of each other. A particular intensity of illumination is capable of being viewed as a particular degree of light; it can also be viewed as a particular degree of darkness. Light and

darkness are not therefore the absolute opposites of each other but only relative aspects of light or of darkness as we may choose to view them. Your theory of absolute opposites therefore has no basis in fact.

Further, you seem to have also misconceived the scope of inference. As I have mentioned before, unless you have a prior knowledge of the fact that there is something to be inferred, no process of inference can possibly be started in your mind. Suppose a person who has never seen or heard of fire sees smoke. He cannot possibly infer the existence of fire, for to him the smoke that he actually sees is the ultimate fact. A thing which explains itself and does not generate in your minds any desire to know what may be behind it, unless we have already reason to think that the thing which is is really not the thing in itself but depends for its existence upon something else. Similarly, if the world is ever changing and if we have never heard of a changeless being, we will accept the fact of the changing world as it is. The changing world will remain the ultimate fact for us. It requires no explanation, for it is there. If it is changing, what else is there to explain? It is its nature to change. If it ceases to change, it will cease to be the world. If however, we have heard of a changeless being, explanations are necessary to justify the changing character of the world, to point out the relationship between that being and the world and to prove that relationship. Revelation is thus necessary even to put us on the track of enquiry by positing the existence of that changeless being. Reason will be of great help to us in that enquiry. In the absence of the sure guide of revelation, reasoning is mere groping in the dark.

Again, if you think that everything in the world is changing and if you want to infer something from this perceived fact, your inference can only be in this way. 'Everything is changing. If there is another thing, that also must be changing.' That is, in the region of inference you cannot get away from the perceived relationship between a cause and a phenomenon. In fact, inference is based only on the invariability of that perceived relationship. If your experience tells you that whatever is changes, your inference cannot possibly tell you that there is something which is, but does not change. On the other hand, it will tell you that, inasmuch as that something is, it also must change.

Finally, the utmost that reason may take you to is that something changeless may exist; it cannot tell you as a positive fact that it does exist nor can it tell you what it is.

A.: I am greatly obliged to you, Swāmiji, for presenting before me the value of revelation in this light. I have never heard it so expounded till now.

3. OTHER RELIGIONS

A.: But again my initial difficulty in understanding the need for, rather the fact of, several conflicting religions, all purporting to point out the path to the light, remains unsolved.

H. H.: I told you that the principle of *adhikāra* or competency rules the world. As there are various gradations in competency, there are various faiths suited to those particular gradations.

A.: I can quite understand this. But no religion is prepared to admit that it is intended for people of a particular grade alone. In fact, every religion claims to be the highest and the only true one.

H. H.: Suppose a young boy is simultaneously asked by four persons issuing independent commands to light a lamp, to trim the wick, to fill the oilcan and to put out the light. He will be in a hopeless mess and will not at all know what to do. All these things cannot be done simultaneously but each of those four persons insists upon his command being obeyed. What is the poor boy to do? If a fifth gentleman turns up and says 'Bring me a pair of scissors', he is adding one more command to the four already existing. The boy is already perplexed by the four contradictory commands. Now he has to choose from among five. That is, his difficulty is increased by the advent of the fifth gentleman and not at all lessened. If, however, this gentleman is kindly disposed towards the boy and wants to help him out of his difficulty and if the boy with true faith turns to him for help, the gentleman has to tell him emphatically 'Bring me the pair of scissors. You need not obey the other commands'. That is, to serve as a practical guide to the perplexed boy, he has to say that his command alone is the one to be obeyed and not the others. Similarly, any religious teacher claiming to give practical guidance to those who have faith in him has necessarily to say 'Do as I ask you to do. Ignore the commands of others.'

A.: That means, the religious teachers adopted their teachings to the calibre and competency of the people who came to them for guidance and to the cir-

cumstances of the times when they lived. In other words, their teachings were only relatively true, though perhaps the teachers were themselves aware of the absolute truth. In determining what to teach and what not, they were guided more by diplomatic expediency than by unswerving regard for truth.

H. H.: Rather, they were guided by the needs and the competency of the people. As I mentioned before, a glass of cold water gives comfort to a healthy man when he is thirsty, but is positively harmful to the man laid up with fever. If a physician allows one man to take cold water and prohibits another from taking it, no partiality can be attributed to him. Nor can the cold water be blamed for relieving the one and harming the other.

A.: How then is one to know whether a particular truth enunciated by a teacher is the absolute truth or only a relative truth ?

H. H.: Why do you want to know it ? Is it to determine the relative superiority or inferiority of the several teachers or is it to obtain for yourself a practical guide for regulating your life ?

A.: It is really both. I want to know which religious teacher has approximated most to truth and then shape my life according to his teachings.

H. H.: It is an elementary principle that a person who presumes to decide between the relative capacities of two persons must himself possess a capacity higher than both of them, for otherwise he will miss their weak points. Do you think that God has favoured

you with such a high power of intellect that you can claim to sit in judgment over the intellects of Christ, Mahommad and other religious teachers? Further, to decide between two conflicting religions, you must know each one of them thoroughly. Can you profess in the least to have made such a thorough study of any one religion, leave alone the others? Again, is our life long enough to permit of a thorough study of even a single aspect of a religion? Where is then the time to reduce the result of all that study into practice?

4. *THE PRACTICAL GUIDE*

A.: What then, Swāmiji, is your practical advice to me?

H. H.: You believe in God?

A.: I do.

H. H.: You believe in the wisdom of God?

A.: Certainly.

H. H.: You believe that that wisdom will be impressed in every act of God?

A.: Of course.

H. H.: You grant that that wisdom must be apparent even in giving you birth?

A.: It must be.

H. H.: God then had a purpose, a wise purpose, in giving you birth?

A.: I should think so. Even my birth, insignificant though it be when compared with the vast interests of the world, cannot be purposeless.

H. H.: God had a purpose, a wise purpose in giving you birth as the child of a particular set of parents?

A.: That must be. I do not believe in chance.

H. H.: What more patent purpose need be sought after to explain your being born of Christian parents than that in God's view Christianity was the best suited to one of your competency? The Lord in His supreme wisdom can well be relied upon to judge what is the religion best suited for us. He knows that our poor intellects will be helpless in deciding for us the path which we should tread. He takes upon Himself the responsibility of deciding that path and gives us birth in a country, clime, time and faith best suited for us. Why should we ignore this gracious mercy of the Lord and try to do the impossible by comparing the relative values of the several religions?

A.: I have tried to understand Christianity and follow it to the best of my lights, but very many doubts are cropping up now and then and I have not been able to meet anybody who can solve them. That is why I wanted to study other religions.

H. H.: Doubts can never be solved unless you approach the persons who have not merely studied their religion but are daily living it. For the purpose of trade, you are prepared to cross the seas and explore the air, but for the purpose of Truth you want the teachers to come to your door and solve your doubts

for you. The attitude that religion is an interesting side aspect of life must go. If once you realise that religion is life itself and not an aspect of it, you will begin to explore the entire world earnestly for a proper teacher. He is ever available and is only waiting for a symptom of real earnestness in you. I am not prepared to believe that there are no such teachers in Christianity. They may not be in the ordinary world of strife, for such a world does not want them nor have they any use for such a world. They may sometimes be found even in the midst of strife, as strife cannot injure them. Go, therefore, in search of such true Christians and ask them in true humbleness of heart to solve your doubts. They will do so in no time and you will find that God, in spite of your doubts, was after all justified in making you the child of Christian parents.

A.: I cannot sufficiently thank you, Swāmiji, for your kind words of advice. Please allow me to confess that when I came here I had no idea that I would be going away from you with a sincere desire to be a better Christian. But that is the desire which you have inculcated in me. If your aim is to make a Christian a better Christian, a Hindu a better Hindu, and so on, your religion is certainly more catholic than I thought it was. In parting, may I have your gracious blessings?

H. H.: Blessings are the monopoly of God and we must all pray for His gracious blessings. Please let me once more point out to you that God has already blessed you with a good physique, a virile mind and a keen intellect. An artist howsoever capable, pro-

vided though he may be with the finest of colours and the finest of brushes, and even though he may have thought out the finest of subjects, cannot paint a picture on vacant air. He does require a stable background, be it a canvas or a wall, however crude and worthless. Don't waste therefore your gifts on airy speculations as to the relative value of the various religions. Apply your God-given gifts on the stable background of your God-chosen faith, Christianity. When the painting is completed and you contemplate its beauty, the background will fade away from your view of its own accord. But not till then. Remember that.

CHAPTER II

MODERN EDUCATION

1. THE WRONG ATTITUDE

ONE evening a learned Pandit came to pay his respects to His Holiness. After some formal enquiries about his welfare, His Holiness asked him 'What is your elder son studying now ?'

Pandit: He will be appearing for the School Final Examination at the end of the year.

H. H.: And after that ?

Pandit: I have not yet decided. The authorities within recent years have increased the cost of education enormously and I find it very difficult to meet it out of my scanty earnings. I do not know how I can manage if he has to get higher education. The boy however is very intelligent and promising and his teachers assure me that he is bound to shine in life.

H. H.: I suppose, by 'shining in life' you mean becoming rich.

Pandit: Not only that, I include also a status commanding respect and influence.

H. H.: Anyhow you mean only worldly prosperity ?

Pandit: Of course. The education that is being imparted in the English schools is purely secular and I cannot expect any spiritual benefit from it.

D.G. 2

H. H.: I suppose, then you have made other arrangements for training him in your own system of Dharma.

Pandit: Where is the time for it? The morning and the early night are spent by him in preparing his class lessons and in the evenings he must have some recreation; the rest of the day he has to attend the school.

H. H.: That means he has no time in which he can learn and practise some of our Dharmas.

Pandit: Practically none. But I am glad that unlike other boys he is continuing to perform his daily *sandhyā* worship, though somewhat perfunctorily.

H. H.: I am equally glad about it. But don't you think that you are seriously neglecting his spiritual education?

Pandit: I fear I am, but how can I help it in the present conditions of the country?

H. H.: I take it that from your infancy you have been trained in the orthodox method and have been taught the Vedas and other sacred literature.

Pandit: Yes.

H. H.: Do you really believe that such training and teaching have been beneficial to you?

Pandit: Certainly.

H. H.: Are you then justified in denying to your son the kind of training and teaching which you really believe to be beneficial?

Pandit: I know I am not. But what can I do ? It is impossible to get on in this world now without the modern education.

H. H.: I hope you are getting on well enough without that education ?

Pandit: Only so so.

H. H.: How is that ? You are certainly above want. You are held in high respect by everybody who comes into contact with you. What is there to complain about in your case ?

Pandit: Not much, but we are characterised as 'old' Pandits and wherever we go we are looked down upon by the *loukika* gentlemen (officers, pleaders and the like) for want of the modern education which they have received.

H. H.: Why don't you reciprocate by calling them 'modern' and looking down upon them for want of the orthodox education which you have got ?

Pandit: How can we do that ?

H. H.: If you really believe that the training that you have undergone is superior to theirs, that alone must be your proper attitude. There is no reason at all, in any case, why you allow them to look down upon you.

Pandit: It is not a case of our allowing them or not. It is a fact that they do look down upon us.

H. H.: If so, it must equally follow that you must look down upon them whether they allow it or not. Do you really ever maintain that attitude ?

Pandit: I can't say we do.

H. H.: So far as I have been able to understand the trend of modern society, the Pandits not only passively allow themselves to be looked down upon by the modern gentlemen, but positively even look up to them.

Pandit: I fear that is a correct reading of the attitude of most of us.

H.H.: Further, when you see a modern gentleman pass by you in a luxurious car while you are trudging along the road with a bundle of books or clothes under your arm, have you not felt very often envious of him ?

Pandit: I must confess I have sometimes felt so.

H. H.: Though you may not have framed it in so many words, you must have regretted that you were not given the benefit of modern education in your boyhood.

Pandit: Sometimes I have had that regret.

H. H.: That regret must have been unconsciously coupled with another regret that your boyhood has been wasted in the pursuit of the worthless Vedic lore.

Pandit: I do not think my regret took that form, but I have felt that my education could have been on more modern lines.

H. H.: By 'more modern lines', you mean more useful lines.

Pandit: Yes.

H. H.: That is, you felt that the Vedic training was useless or at least less useful than English education?

Pandit: I can't say that I felt so, positively.

H. H.: I quite see that; that is why I stated that you unconsciously felt it. In doing so, you must have impliedly thought ill of your parents for giving you this worthless education.

Pandit: Impliedly, as Your Holiness puts it.

H. H.: Thus, whenever you see a modern gentleman, you are sorry that you have not had his education, you are sorry that you had your education and you mentally think ill of your parents for denying you the former and giving you the latter and incidentally perhaps think ill of your teachers also?

Pandit: It is not always so, but at some moments my mind does admit of such an analysis.

H. H.: If, in spite of the invaluable training you have got, you are sometimes led to look up to the *loukikas*, is it any fault of theirs that they accept your attitude at your own valuation and look down upon you? If you, who know what Vedic culture is, can lower yourself so much as to think ill of your parents, is it any wonder that those who do not know what that culture is do not appreciate it in you? Don't you think also, believing as you do in our Sastras, that the unmerited abuse of the Vedas and of your parents and teachers is a sin bound to land you in more sorrow? Why can't you pity the *loukika* for the waste of his boyhood in the pursuit of purely secular education? Why can't you abuse his parents for spoiling

his spiritual interests by giving him a training divorced from Vedic culture? Why don't you make him feel that you really pity him? And why don't you by your conduct make him look up to you?

2. THE RATIONALE OF ACTIVITY

Pandit: True worth is not recognised in these days. Only wealth counts.

H. H.: But with whom?

Pandit: With all.

H. H.: Certainly not. A thing has value only to the one who wants it. Wealth counts therefore only with those who want it. If you do not want it, you certainly do not care how wealthy another man is.

Pandit: But there is nobody in the world, I mean the world of practical life, who can do without wealth.

H. H.: Quite so. But it does not mean that you must attach more importance to money than it deserves. You seem to forget that money is only a means to happiness and is not happiness itself. You also seem to forget that the happiness to be had in a particular life is all preordained at the beginning of that life itself, that it is bound to come to us whether we exert ourselves to attain it or not, and that no amount of exertion on our part can hasten it or bring about a new kind of happiness. Have you not seen wealthy men in despair and beggars in exuberant joy? How then can you, who have some idea of our religion, believe for a moment that there is any causal relationship between wealth and happiness, much less that

wealth is entitled to respect because it leads to happiness? The right attitude therefore is to take money when it comes and to use it, and not to want money in the sense of anticipating or hankering after it. These matters apart, are you quite sure that by giving your son modern education you will certainly get him to amass wealth or attain the worldly status which is in your perspective?

Pandit: I hope he will, that is all I can say.

H. H.: You are not a layman unaccustomed to right thinking. You must be able to tell me why a person endowed with reason engages himself in a particular activity.

Pandit: It is *kāma* or desire for the result of that activity which impels him to action.

H. H.: Does a person who desires to attain a particular object, engage himself indiscriminately in any activity that catches his fancy?

Pandit: No. He confines himself only to such activities as will yield him the desired result.

H. H.: Or to such activities which, he thinks, will yield him the desired result?

Pandit: Yes.

H. H.: The prime condition of an activity is therefore a conception, which is true or which he assumes to be true, of the relationship between the activity and the desired result as cause and effect. In other words, there can be no activity unless there is

an antecedent knowledge that that activity will lead to a particular result.

Pandit: Yes, that is so.

H. H.: And that knowledge is sufficient to make him act, irrespective of the fact that that knowledge may be right or may be mistaken.

Pandit: It is not usual to include mistaken conceptions in knowledge.

H. H.: By knowledge here I mean only a mental perception! If it accords with actuality, it is right knowledge; if it does not, it is wrong knowledge. Knowledge, right or wrong, is enough to make us act. A boy sees a silver coin before him. Another boy is attracted by a glittering mother-of-pearl. Both stoop down to take what they see. That is my point now. Right knowledge is called *prama* and wrong knowledge is called *bhrama*. Will you now tell me how *pramā* is caused?

Pandit: It is caused by *pramānas*, the means of right knowledge.

H. H.: Quite so. Leaving aside technicalities, the *pramaṇas* are three in number, *pratyaksha* or direct sense-perception, *anumāna* or inference, and *śabda* or authoritative word. Are they not?

Pandit: Yes.

H. H.: Right knowledge of the relationship between two things, e.g., the causal relationship between modern education and wealth, can therefore be convey-

ed to us in any of these ways, *pratyaksha*, *anumāna* and *śabda*.

Pandit: Certainly.

3. EDUCATION AND WEALTH

H. H.: Now we shall see how that relationship is brought home to us. When the Englishmen came to our country and assumed the responsibility of governing us, they found it very difficult to carry on the administration without a knowledge of the vernaculars. Some of them therefore learned the vernaculars. But the majority found it difficult. However, as they wanted to carry on trade and converse with the natives of the land, both in the interests of trade and in the interests of the Government, they hit upon the idea of educating the Indians in English so that the latter can talk to Englishmen in English and to their own people in the languages of the country. Such persons who mainly acted as interpreters were called *dvi-bhāshīs* (two-languaged), corrupted into 'Dubāshes'. The Englishmen owing to their ignorance of the native tongues had to rely mainly upon the Dubāsh for their transactions with the natives; similarly the natives also had to rely upon the Dubāsh, as they were ignorant of the Englishman's tongue. Thus the Dubāsh commanded a position of great influence at the beginning of the British rule and grew rapidly rich because of his usefulness to both the parties.

Pandit: No doubt so.

H. H.: At that time perhaps it may be stated that the causal relationship between English education and

wealth was perceived by direct perception or *pratyaksha*. We cannot say now that by any direct perception we become aware of any such relationship.

Pandit: Certainly not. There are at least half a dozen graduates in every village who do not see their way to employment, much less to wealth.

H. H.: It is not only that. We find that the modern educated young men, whether they are able to earn a proper living or not, have undoubtedly learnt to be costly in their habits. They therefore not only find themselves without the means of livelihood, but are actually far worse off than those who have had our own education and have learnt to live simple and unostentatious lives.

Pandit: It is so.

H. H.: I mention this to point out to you that if *pratyaksha* now teaches anything, it not only negatives the causal relationship between modern education and wealth, but goes to the opposite length of showing that there is, on the other hand, a causal relationship between modern education and poverty.

Pandit: That is so. We see as a matter of fact a large number of well-to-do families getting impoverished day by day in the attempt to give their children modern education.

H. H.: Now, the time favourable to the Dubāsh passed away with more and more of us going in for English education. Then came the stage of *anumāna* or inference. So-and-so had English education and earned therewith two or three lakhs of rupees.

Another So-and-so had English education and earned a lakh or two. We deduced therefrom a proposition 'My son also is having English education and therefore shall become rich.' But this deduction cannot be correct as it ignores the several instances of failures. The 'shall become rich' therefore really means only 'may become rich'. But, in course of time, we realise that in actual life there are only very few who are in the highest rungs of worldly status and that the majority of those who have had English education are no better off, if not really worse off, than before. The exceptions to the rule turn out to be so numerous that we begin to doubt the validity of the rule and to even think that the exception is really the rule. At present, we cannot say that *anumāna* guides us to a knowledge of the relationship between modern education and wealth. There is only one other source of knowledge and that is *śabda*, the authoritative word. The Eternal Word (the Vedas) does not teach us any such relationship. We have therefore to confine ourselves to *laukika śabda* or the secular word. Sometime back it took the form of circulars and notifications by Government and other bodies that young men having such and such qualifications will be given such and such posts on such and such a pay. But as there is no guarantee for such secular words, it is not incumbent on such bodies to give us the employment. They may quite well say and have said often 'No doubt, we put up such notifications but we are not prepared now to act up to them. If necessary, we may even withdraw them.' Even this attitude has since changed and I hear that there are positive notifications the other way, e.g., that persons though possessed of high

qualifications will not be given employment if they happen to be Brāhmaṇas. It would seem, therefore, that the *sabda* now not only does not bear out any relationship between English education and wealth, but positively denies that relationship, at least as regards the Brāhmaṇas.

Pandit: Disqualifying us from employment simply because we happen to be Brāhmaṇas is most unjust. Efficiency alone ought to be the test of a candidate.

H. H.: Our young men are prepared to wipe out their Brāhmanahood and we must really be very thankful to the Government for reminding them that it is in their blood and can not be wiped out, however much they may try to look outwardly as unlike a Brāhmaṇa as one can and however much they may neglect their own Dharma as Brāhmaṇas. It is to be hoped that at least now our young men will realise the folly of giving up their own Dharma in the vain hope of getting some vague worldly status. Now, you will agree with me that none of the *pramanas*: *pratyaksha*, *anumāna* or *sabda*, establish any causal relationship between modern education and wealth. That relationship is not therefore brought home to us by *pramā* or right knowledge. Still we act as if there were such a relationship, for we continue to send our children to the English schools. Why do we do so?

Pandit: I see that Your Holiness is driving me to the only alternative conclusion that we are doing so because of *bhrama*, a mistaken conception of the existence of such a relation.

H. H.: But a mistake can never exist simultaneously with a right knowledge of the opposite kind. A boy cannot mistake a mother-of-pearl for silver when he knows that it is mother-of-pearl. That is, when *prama* or right knowledge is present, there can be no room for *bhrama* or mistaken conception.

Pandit: Quite true. How does that apply to the present question ?

H. H.: I have pointed out to you that, if the three *pramaṇas*: *pratyaksha*, *anumāna* and *śabda*, convey to us any knowledge at present, they are unanimous in negating the causal relationship between modern education and wealth. If *pramā* therefore tells us that there is no such causal relationship, how can any *bhrama*, to the contrary, exist at the same time ? The *bhrama* which may have existed sometime back has now been entirely dispelled.

Pandit: If then neither *pramā* nor *bhrama* is responsible for our action, why do we act at all as if that relationship exists ?

H. H.: That is for you to explain. I started with saying that nobody endowed with reason will engage himself in any activity unless he had a knowledge, right or wrong, that it will lead to a particular result

Pandit: Evidently, Your Holiness means that we do not reason out the matter or stop to consider the pros and cons before we engage ourselves in any activity.

H. H.: Certainly. By our carelessness we forfeit our birthright as man, the thinker, and allow things

to drift for themselves. It is this sheep-like attitude that is responsible for most of the modern ills which affect us, especially the Brāhmaṇas.

Pandit: May I know what Your Holiness will advise me to do at present ?

H. H.: My advice is of no use unless there is any likelihood of its being followed. For your boy who is young and not yet put to school, I would advise you to keep him with you and give him the education and training which our forefathers had highly valued ; you may at the same time set apart for him every month what money you will have to spend and are prepared to spend on him for giving him the English education. You will find that at the end of such a course your son has been brought up as a true Brāhmaṇa and that you have at the same time placed him above want. As regards the elder boy who has been studying in English school, make him realise that that education is at best only a means of livelihood and that there are higher objects in life than mere living and that he must turn to our religion for securing such objects. He must not ignore his spiritual welfare, in the interests of mere living. Ask him to keep himself in touch with our traditional lore and observances, at least when he is at home. That is the least you can do for him.

Pandit: I am very grateful to Your Holiness for this advice and I shall try to follow it to the best of my ability.

CHAPTER III

THE MEANS OF HAPPINESS

1. CAUSE AND EFFECT

IN one of the quiet villages where His Holiness was camping for a few days, a party of villagers, including Brāhmaṇas, came one evening to pay their respects to him and while doing so their spokesman said :

S.: Till some years back our village was a prosperous one. During recent years however it has gone down very much. We pray therefore that Your Holiness will be pleased to confer your blessings upon us, so that the village may once again get back to its former prosperity.

H. H.: Certainly the Lord will listen to your earnest prayers. But I desire to point out that an appeal to the Lord is necessary only when the remedy is not in our hands.

S.: How is the remedy in our hands ?

H. H.: You tell me that the village has gone down in prosperity during the recent years. But, if my information is not incorrect, there are more storeyed houses now than before and the houses are mostly built in stone, brick and mortar and are well lighted, well ventilated and attractive, quite unlike the mud-walled dark and dingy thatched huts in which your forefathers spent their lives.

S.: It is no doubt so.

H. H.: You wear clothes finer and costlier than what your ancestors were content with and have very many things which they never even dreamt of.

S.: Certainly.

H. H.: While they travelled by rickety carts along muddy roads to villages only a few miles away, you can now travel by the best of motor cars over well-paved roads to places thirty times more distant in about the same time.

S.: It is true we have all this.

H. H.: While they had to be content with the oil lamp of local manufacture to light their houses, you get yours from across the seas; you have brilliant lights now, even if electric installations have not yet reached your village.

S.: No doubt, we have.

H. H.: Then what is your complaint? You have in abundance all the requisites of comfort and happiness, far more than your ancestors had. What more do you want?

S.: It is true that we have all these things but the fact remains that we are not as comfortable and happy as our forefathers.

H. H.: How can that be? If the means of happiness have, as you admit, increased, happiness also must have increased. It cannot possibly be reduced in any case.

S.: It is however reduced and we desire to know how we can regain the old happy state.

H. H.: Then we must enquire into the matter a little deeper. There must be something wrong somewhere. If, as you admit, the means of happiness have increased, the only possible logical conclusion is, either that we are wrong in the assumption of the real means of happiness or that some additional factor is necessary to bring happiness, assuming that they are real means. We shall first consider whether the modern improvements that you now enjoy are really the means of happiness. Ordinarily, we deduce the relationship of cause and effect between two things if one of them invariably precedes the other. This method is positive and is known as the *anvaya* method. The negative method is known as *vyatireka*, that is, when we deduce the relationship of cause and effect between two things by noticing that the absence of the one invariably precedes the absence of the other. We note that the existence of wet clay invariably precedes the making of a clay pot. We note also that if no wet clay is available no clay pot can be made. We infer from these two parallel and corroborating facts that wet clay is the cause and the pot is the effect. Similarly, if we want to verify the statement that the modern advantages are the cause of happiness, we must adopt these two methods. Now you find that you enjoy these modern amenities and yet have no happiness?

S.: It is so.

H. H.: That means that the reasoning by the
D.G. 3

anvaya method does not lead you to the conclusion that they are related as cause and effect.

S.: It seems so.

H. H.: You further admit that your forefathers did not have these modern amenities and yet were happy.

S.: They were.

H. H.: This again means that the reasoning by the *vyatireka* method also does not establish such a relationship.

S.: It is so.

H. H.: It follows therefore that the modern amenities are not the real means of happiness.

S.: Logically it does.

H. H.: But we do want happiness ?

S.: Certainly.

H. H.: We must not therefore stop with merely throwing overboard the advantages that we have, but must seek to know what are the real means of happiness and try to obtain them.

S.: No doubt, but what are those means ?

H. H.: That is exactly the question to be considered now. Adopting the same line of reasoning, we must ascertain what means were present when our ancestors were happy and what is absent in us now when we are not happy.

S.: Certainly, but what is that ?

H. H.: Think for a while yourself. They performed their daily Vedic rites and attended punctiliously to the dictates of the Dharma Śāstras. Did they not ?

S.: Certainly they did.

H. H.: Now, you neglect them, don't you ?

S.: I fear, we do.

H. H.: They had *āchāra* or right conduct and had great regard for virtues like truth. You cannot say that you have such a conduct or such a regard.

S.: I must confess, we have not.

H. H.: Why did they perform their religious duties so well and why do you neglect them ?

S.: I suppose the times are responsible for it.

H. H.: That is a lame excuse and explains nothing. The truth is that you are wanting in the faith that your ancestors had.

S.: That is true.

H. H.: It seems, therefore, that people were happy when they had faith and acted according to it and that people are not happy when they are wanting in faith and neglect their duties.

S.: Yes.

H. H.: *Śraddhā* or faith and Dharma or right action are thus invariably present where happiness is found and are invariably absent where happiness is not found. They are therefore the cause of happiness. Get them back and you will get back your happiness.

S.: But we see even now that there are a large number of people who have *śraddhā* and stick to their Dharma, but are no more happy than ourselves.

H. H.: That is not correct. It may be that they are not in as affluent circumstances as others but, as I have pointed out, that is no criterion of their happiness. Happiness is a state of mind and cannot be gauged by the quality or quantity of external possessions.

S.: How is that ?

H. H.: A person may be the lord of all the three worlds and yet be unhappy. Another may be the poorest of beggars and yet be the happiest man in the world.

S.: I quite see it. On what then does happiness depend ?

2. HAPPINESS CAUSED

H. H.: Ordinarily speaking, we say that we are happy when we get the thing we are longing for.

S.: Yes.

H. H.: At the time when we are longing for a thing, our mind is in a state of unrest ; but when we get that thing, the state of unrest is replaced by a sense of rest or peace.

S.: Yes.

H. H.: We say, again, that we are happy when we get rid of a thing which we were loathing.

S.: Yes.

H. H.: At the time when we are loathing a thing, our mind is in a state of unrest; but when we get rid of that thing, the state of unrest is replaced by a sense of rest or peace.

S.: Yes.

H. H.: In either case, therefore, it would seem that happiness is practically identical with the feeling of rest or peace. It does not matter what exactly is the immediate occasion for it, whether it be the obtaining of a desirable object or the getting rid of an undesirable object. Happiness follows when a preceding state of unrest is ended.

S.: It is so.

H. H.: It cannot matter also how that preceding state of unrest is ended. Obtaining a thing or getting rid of another is the ordinary method of stopping the unrest. But if there is some other method by which it can be stopped, even then happiness is bound to follow.

S.: Certainly.

H. H.: The number of things in the world that can awaken desire is infinite. If a man gets a particular thing, the mental unrest caused by the longing for that thing may cease, but it will only be replaced by another mental unrest caused by the longing for another thing. The process will be repeating itself *ad infinitum* as there is no limit to the number of things which can be desired. It is therefore practically impossible to obtain absolute mental rest by trying

to satisfy our longings. Similarly, the number of things that are undesirable is also infinite. If you get rid of a particular undesirable object, no doubt you get mental peace for the moment ; but the next moment you will become restless, because another thing will be troubling you. The process here also will be going on indefinitely and interminably as the things that may give us trouble in the world are countless. It is equally impossible therefore to obtain absolute mental rest by trying to get rid of or avoiding troublesome things.

S.: But we do want mental peace.

H.H.: Quite so. If, therefore, we seek to allay our unrest by trying to secure the things which the mind asks for or to get rid of the things which disturb it, we must ever remain searching for peace, which never can be attained. It must also be borne in mind that it is not quite within our competence to obtain or get rid of a particular thing at our pleasure ; in fact, we are slaves of circumstances, if we depend upon them for our happiness.

S.: How else then are we to get peace and happiness ?

H. H.: Is it a necessary condition of health that it must have been preceded by a state of ill-health ?

S.: Certainly not.

H. H.: A man is said to be healthy when he has no sickness. He need not have been sick before.

S.: No.

H. H.: It will, therefore, be foolish to define a healthy man as one who has suffered from a disease and is now free from it. Certainly such a man may be called healthy but the expression 'healthy man' cannot be applied to him. Freedom from sickness is a condition of health but certainly not an antecedent sickness and a recovery from it.

S.: Quite so. But I fail to see the relevancy here.

H. H.: Similarly, happiness can only mean a freedom from unhappiness; it cannot be a necessary condition of happiness that it should have been preceded by a state of unhappiness. A man whose mental equilibrium has been disturbed by an attraction to a particular thing or by a repulsion to another may be called happy when the equilibrium is once again restored by the thing being obtained or got rid of, as the case may be. But it will be foolish to say that all happiness necessarily assumes a previous state of unrest.

S.: It will be so.

H. H.: As we can conceive of health without assuming a preceding sickness, so must we be able to conceive of happiness without assuming a preceding mental unrest. In fact, the health which is not preceded by a sickness is more natural, perfect and permanent than the one which comes into being on the cessation of a sickness. Similarly, the happiness which is not preceded by a mental disturbance will be more natural, perfect and enduring than the one which follows a mental disturbance.

S.: It is bound to be so. But how can we get

such a happiness ? Ordinarily we get it only by seeking pleasure or avoiding pain.

H. H.: Quite so. But, if there is a third method by which you can have happiness without undergoing the antecedent trouble of seeking pleasure or avoiding pain, you will agree with me that the happiness thus secured will be more perfect.

3. HAPPINESS UNCAUSED

S.: Certainly, but what is that third method ?

H. H.: It is only this. Merely cease to submit yourself to that antecedent trouble.

S.: How can we do that ?

H. H.: Man is and remains healthy when he refuses to submit himself to anything which may cause sickness. Is it not so ?

S.: Yes.

H. H.: Similarly, man can be happy by refusing to submit himself to anything which may disturb his mental equilibrium and make him unhappy. It is only an application of the maxim that prevention is better than cure. For calling yourself clean it is not necessary that you dip your hands in mire and then wash it off.

S.: I now understand that the happiness which results from attraction or repulsion is not real happiness. Real happiness is only that which is the concomitant of mental equipoise unrelated to any attraction or repulsion.

H. H.: Quite so.

S.: But how can we acquire and retain such a mental equipoise in the midst of this vast universe of things which either attract or repel?

H. H.: Anyhow, this is certainly a more practical method than the one of trying to exhaust the inexhaustible store of things, desirable and undesirable.

S.: This method may be foolish but the other does not seem to be practical.

H. H.: Why not? Suppose you have about twenty articles in your room every one of which is likely to distract you by its very sight. Which is the more practical method, to prepare cases for enveloping every one of them or to shut your eyes?

S.: Certainly, the latter is easier.

H. H.: Similarly, it is impossible for you to regulate, modify, annihilate or create at your pleasure the infinite things of the universe which are likely to disturb you. But you can so regulate your own mind that it may gradually cease to be disturbed by them. This is quite within your competence. Your forefathers were happy, not because they had more objects of pleasure or less causes of trouble, but because they were able to retain their mental equilibrium, which gave them rest, peace and contentment and, therefore, happiness. They did not depend upon outside things to make them happy, nor did they concede to outside things the capacity to make them unhappy. Their feeling of rest and peace, contentment and happiness, was normal, natural and healthy and, therefore,

lasting. You must also cultivate that feeling if you want to be happy. Such a feeling is inborn and ingrained in the Brāhmaṇa especially, and if he neglects it and seeks for happiness in the outside world, he is seriously impairing his chances of getting it again in the next birth, for God will be quite justified in withholding a gift which the donee does not appreciate at its proper value when he has it with him. Never let go your birthright or *svabhāva* of contentment and never give the go-by to your *svadharma* or duty. Everything will right itself in due course. Make honest and sincere attempt to regain and retain your *brāhmanyam* in the firm faith that God is ever with you to help you.

S.: We shall try our best, but these happen to be very bad days for the Brāhmaṇas.

H. H.: When did the bad days begin? You must bear that also in your mind. They began when the Brāhmaṇas swerved from their *āchāra* and Dharma and entered the field of competition in the pursuit of worldly things. They forgot that they were most ungratefully misusing the heritage of ages. The others, who were left behind the Brāhmaṇas in this race, first looked upon them with admiration and later on with envy and now with hatred. Let the Brāhmaṇas withdraw from this race; they will once again regain and command the respect which is their due. They commanded respect before, not because they were richer or stronger than others, but because of their contentment, which made them happier than the richest and because of their Dharma, which made them stronger than the strongest. The so-called bad days are there-

fore only of our own making. We can at any moment put an end to them, so far as every one of us is concerned, by reverting to the simple faith and the upright conduct, the religious fervour and the peaceful contentment of our fathers. I think that the bad days will turn out to be really useful and not after all bad, if they but make the Brāhmaṇas realise the depth of their fall from their true ideal and induce them to make honest endeavour to recover it

CHAPTER IV

FATE AND FREE-WILL

1. A FUTILE ENQUIRY

ONE evening a disciple approached His Holiness with a view to obtain some valuable instruction but found words wanting to express his intention and His Holiness came to his relief by starting the conversation himself.

H. H.: I hope you are pursuing your studies in the Vedānta as usual.

D.: I cannot say that I make any regular study but I do study somewhat off and on.

H. H.: In the course of your studies, you would have been faced with many doubts.

D.: I cannot say that I have studied deep enough even for that.

H. H.: I do not mean the doubts which arise when we endeavour to grasp the technicalities of the Vedānta system, but only those broad problems which present themselves to any one who makes an attempt at serious thinking.

D.: Certainly, there are very many such doubts.

H. H.: Will you formulate one of such doubts and tell me how you have tried to solve it?

D.: I shall mention one of such doubts which is repeatedly coming up to my mind and for which I have found no solution yet. I shall be very grateful if Your Holiness will solve it for me.

H. H.: Please mention it.

D.: It is no other than the problem of the eternal conflict between fate and free-will. What are their respective provinces and how can the conflict be avoided ?

H.H.: The problem is indeed a very great one and would baffle the intellect of the highest thinkers, if presented in the way you have done it.

D.: What is wrong with my presentation ? In fact, I only stated my problem and did not even explain how I find it difficult to solve.

H.H.: Your difficulty arises even in that mere statement of the problem.

D.: How ?

H. H.: A conflict is conceivable and possible only if there are two things. There can be no conflict if there is only a single thing.

D.: But here there are two things, fate and free-will.

H. H.: Exactly. It is just that assumption that is responsible for the problem arising in your mind.

D.: It is not my assumption at all. How can I ignore the fact that they do exist as independent factors; whether I grant their existence or not.

H.H.: That is where you are wrong again.

D.: How ?

H. H.: As a follower of our Sanātana Dharma, you must know that fate is nothing extraneous to yourself, but is only the sum total of the results of your past actions. As God is but the dispenser of the fruits of your actions, fate, representing those fruits, is not His creation but only yours. Free-will is what you exercise when you act now.

D.: Still I do not see how they are not two distinct things.

H. H.: Have it this way. Fate is past *karma*; free-will is present *karma*. Both are really one, that is, *karma*, though they may differ in the matter of time. There can be no conflict when they are really one.

D.: But the difference in time is a vital difference which we cannot possibly overlook.

H. H.: I do not want you to overlook it, but only to study it more deeply. The present is before you and, by the exercise of free-will, you can attempt to shape it. The past is past and is therefore beyond your vision and is rightly called *adrishta*, the unseen. You cannot reasonably attempt to find out the relative strength of two things unless both of them are before you. But, by our very definition, free-will, the present *karma*, alone is before you and fate, the past *karma*, is invisible. Even if you see two wrestlers physically squatting before you, you cannot decide about their relative strength. For, one may have weight, the other

agility ; one muscles and the other tenacity ; one the benefit of practice and the other of coolness of judgment and so on. We can on these grounds go on building arguments on arguments to prove that a particular wrestler will be the winner. But experience shows that each of these qualifications may fail at any time or may prove to be a disqualification. The only reasonable, practical and sure method of determining their relative strength is to ask them to wrestle with each other. While this is so, how do you expect to find by means of arguments a solution to the problem of the relative value of fate and free-will when the former by its very nature is unseen !

D.: Is there no way then of solving this problem ?

H. H.: There is this way. The wrestlers must fight with each other and prove which of them is the stronger.

D.: In other words, the problem of conflict will get solved only at the end of the conflict. But at that time the problem will have ceased to have any practical significance.

H. H.: Not only so, it will cease to exist.

D.: That is, before the conflict begins, the problem is incapable of solution ; and, after the conflict ends, it is no longer necessary to find a solution.

H. H.: Just so. In either case, it is profitless to embark on the enquiry as to the relative strength of fate and free-will.

2. FATE A GUIDE TO CONDUCT

D.: Does Your Holiness then mean to say that we must resign ourselves to fate?

H. H.: Certainly not. On the other hand, you must devote yourself to free-will.

D.: How can that be?

H. H.: Fate, as I told you, is the resultant of the past exercise of your free-will. By exercising your free-will in the past, you brought on the resultant fate. By exercising your free-will in the present, I want you to wipe out your past record if it hurts you, or add to it if you find it enjoyable. In any case, whether for acquiring more happiness or for reducing misery, you have to exercise your free-will in the present.

D.: But the exercise of free-will however well directed, very often fails to secure the desired result, as fate steps in and nullifies the action of free-will.

H. H.: You are again ignoring our definition of fate. It is not an extraneous and a new thing which steps in to nullify your free-will. On the other hand, it is already in yourself.

D.: It may be so, but its existence is felt only when it comes into conflict with free-will. How can we possibly wipe out the past record when we do not know nor have the means of knowing what it is?

H. H.: Except to a very few highly advanced souls, the past certainly remains unknown. But even

our ignorance of it is very often an advantage to us. For, if we happened to know all the limitless varieties of results which we have accumulated by our actions in this life and the countless lives that have preceded it, we will be simply staggered at the magnitude and number of such results and give up in despair any attempt to overcome or mitigate them. Even in this life, forgetfulness is a boon which the merciful God has been pleased to bestow on us, so that we may not be burdened at any moment with a recollection of all that has transpired in the past. Similarly, the divine spark in us is ever bright with hope and makes it possible for us to confidently exercise our free-will. It is not for us to belittle the significance of these two boons, forgetfulness of the past and hope for the future.

D.: Our ignorance of the past may be useful in not deterring the exercise of the free-will and hope may stimulate that exercise. All the same, it cannot be denied that fate very often does present a formidable obstacle in the way of such exercise.

H. H.: It is not quite correct to say that fate places obstacles in the way of free-will. On the other hand, by seeming to oppose our efforts, it tells us what is the extent of free-will that is necessary now to bear fruit. Ordinarily for the purpose of securing a single benefit a particular activity is prescribed; but we do not know how intensively or how repeatedly that activity has to be pursued or persisted in. If we do not succeed at the very first attempt, we can easily deduce that in the past we have exercised our free-will just in the opposite direction, that the resultant of that

D.G. 4

past activity has first to be eliminated and that our present effort must be proportionate to that past activity. Thus the obstacle which fate seems to offer is just the gauge by which we have to guide our present activities.

D.: The obstacle is seen only after the exercise of our free-will; how can that help us to guide our activities at the start?

H. H.: It need not guide us at the start. At the start, you must not be obsessed at all with the idea that there will be any obstacle in your way. Start with boundless hope and with the presumption that there is nothing in the way of your exercising the free-will. If you do not succeed, tell yourself then that there has been in the past a counter influence brought on by yourself by exercising your free-will in the other direction and, therefore, you must now exercise your free-will with re-doubled vigour and persistence to achieve your object. Tell yourself that, in as much as the seeming obstacle is of your own making, it is certainly within your competence to overcome it. If you do not succeed even after this renewed effort, there can be absolutely no justification for despair, for fate being but a creature of your free-will can never be stronger than free-will. Your failure only means that your present exercise of free-will is not sufficient to counteract the result of the past exercise of it. In other words, there is no question of a relative proportion between fate and free-will as distinct factors in life. The relative proportion is only as between the intensity of our past action and the intensity of our present action.

D.: But even so, the relative intensity can be realised only at the end of our present effort in a particular direction.

H. H.: It is always so in the case of everything which is *adrishta* or unseen. Take, for example, a nail driven into a wooden pillar. When you see it for the first time, you actually see, say, an inch of it projecting out of the pillar. The rest of it has gone into the wood and you cannot now see what exact length of the nail is imbedded in the wood. That length therefore is unseen or *adrishta*, so far as you are concerned. Beautifully varnished as the pillar is, you do not know what is the composition of the wood in which the nail is driven. That also is unseen or *adrishta*. Now, suppose you want to pull that nail out, can you tell me how many pulls will be necessary and how powerful each pull has to be?

D.: How can I fix the number of pulls now? The number and the intensity of the pulls depend upon the length which has gone into the wood.

H. H.: Certainly so. And the length which has gone into the wood is not arbitrary but depended upon the number of strokes which drove it in and the intensity of each of such strokes and the resistance which the wood offered to them.

D.: It is so.

H. H.: The number and intensity of the pulls needed to take out the nail depend therefore upon the number and intensity of the strokes which drove it in.

D.: Yes. ❀ सुकुमु भवन वेद वेदाङ्ग पुस्तकालय ❀

आगत क्रमांक.....

वा रा ग सी ।

1417

H. H.: But the strokes that drove in the nail are now unseen and unseeable. They relate to the past and are *adrishta*.

D.: Yes.

H. H.: Do we desist from the attempt to pull out the nail simply because we happen to be ignorant of the length of the nail in the wood or of the number and intensity of the strokes which drove it in? Or, do we persist and persevere in pulling it out by increasing the number and the intensity of our present efforts to pull it out?

D.: Certainly as practical men we adopt the latter course.

H. H.: Adopt the same course in every effort of yours. Exert yourself as much as you can. Your will must succeed in the end.

3. FUNCTION OF THE ŚĀSTRAS

D.: But there certainly are many things which are impossible to attain even after the utmost exertion.

H. H.: There you are mistaken. If there is any thing, it is by its very nature capable of being experienced. There is nothing which is really unattainable. A thing, however, may be unattainable to us at the particular stage at which we are, or with the qualifications that we possess. The attainability or otherwise of a particular thing is thus not an absolute characteristic of that thing but is relative and proportionate to our capacity to attain it.

D.: The success or failure of an effort can be known definitely only at the end. How are we then to know beforehand whether with our present capacity we may or may not exert ourselves to attain a particular object, and whether it is the right kind of exertion for the attainment of that object ?

H. H.: Your question is certainly a very pertinent one. The whole aim of our Dharma Śāstras is to give a detailed answer to your question. They analyse our capacities, *adhikāra* or competency, and prescribe the activities which a person endowed with a particular *adhikāra* can undertake. The activities are various and numberless, as the capacities also happen to be various and numberless. Regulation of activities or, in other words, the directing of free-will into channels least harmful and most beneficial to the aspirant, is the main function of religion. Such regulated activity is called *svadharma*. Religion does not fetter man's free-will. It leaves him quite free to act, but tells him at the same time what is good for him and what is not. The responsibility is entirely and solely his. He cannot escape it by blaming fate, for fate is of his own making, nor by blaming God, for He is but the dispenser of fruits in accordance with the merits of actions. You are the master of your own destiny. It is for you to make it, to better it or to mar it. This is your privilege. This is your responsibility.

D.: I quite realise this. But often it so happens that I am not really master of myself. I know, for instance, quite well that a particular act is wrong; at the same time I feel impelled to do it. Similarly, I know that another act is right; at the same time,

however, I feel powerless to do it. It seems to me that there is some power which is able to control or defy my free-will. So long as that power is potent, how can I be called the master of my own destiny? What is that power but fate?

H. H.: You are evidently confusing together two distinct things. Fate is a thing quite different from the other which you call a power. Suppose you handle an instrument for the first time. You will do it very clumsily and with great effort. The next time, however, you use it, you will do so less clumsily and with less effort. With repeated uses, you will have learnt to use it easily and without any effort. That is, the facility and ease with which you use a particular thing increase with the number of times you use it. The repeated and familiar use will leave behind a tendency to use it. The first time a man steals, he does so with great effort and much fear; the next time both his effort and fear are much less. As opportunities increase, stealing will become a normal habit with him and will require no effort at all. This habit will generate in him a tendency to steal even when there is no necessity to steal. It is this tendency which goes by the name of *vāsanā*. The power which makes you act as if against your will is only the *vāsanā* which itself is of your own making. This is not fate. The punishment or reward, in the shape of pain or pleasure, which is the inevitable consequence of an act, bad or good, is alone the province of fate or destiny. The *vāsanā* which the doing of an act leaves behind in the mind in the shape of a taste, a greater facility or a greater tendency for doing the same act once again, is quite a different thing. It may be that the

punishment or the reward of a past act is, in ordinary circumstances, unavoidable, if there is no counter-effort; but the *vāsanā* can be easily handled if only we exercise our free-will correctly.

D.: But the number of *vāsanās* or tendencies that rule our hearts are endless. How can we possibly control them?

H. H.: The essential nature of a *vāsanā* is to seek expression in outward acts. This characteristic is common to all *vāsanās*, good and bad. The stream of *vāsanā*, the *vāsanā-sarit*, as it is called, has two currents, the good and the bad. If you try to dam up the entire stream, there may be danger. The Śāstras, therefore, do not ask you to attempt that. On the other hand, they ask you to submit yourself to be led by the good *vāsanā* current and to resist being led away by the bad *vāsanā* current. When you know that a particular *vāsanā* is rising up in your mind, you cannot possibly say that you are at its mercy. You have your wits about you and the responsibility of deciding whether you will encourage it or not is entirely yours. The Śāstras enunciate in detail what *vāsanās* are good and have to be encouraged and what *vāsanās* are bad and have to be overcome. When, by dint of practice, you have made all your *vāsanās* good and practically eliminated the chance of any bad *vāsanās* leading you astray, the Śāstras take upon themselves the function of teaching you how to free your free-will even from the need of being led by good *vāsanās*. You will gradually be led on to a stage when your free-will will be entirely free from any sort of colouring due to any *vāsanās*. At that stage, your mind will be pure as

crystal and all motive for particular action will cease to be. Freedom from the results of particular actions is an inevitable consequence. Both fate and *vāsanā* disappear. There is freedom for ever more and that freedom is called *Moksha*.

CHAPTER V

THE LEGAL PROFESSION

1. A TRAINING GROUND

One afternoon a lawyer was presented to His Holiness and the friend who introduced him said: 'It is usually thought that modern education has a tendency to injure the *brāhmaṇyam* of the person who seeks it. If that is the rule, my friend here is an exception, for he continues to be as orthodox as one can be and observes the duties of a Brāhmaṇa with scrupulous exactitude.'

H. H.: I am really very glad to learn that he is able to lead a true Brāhmaṇa life in spite of his modern education. Knowing as I do the nature of that education, I must decline, however, to believe that he is an exception to the rule stated by you. If he had not had this education, I am sure he would have been a veritable Vāśishtha. It must have had its effect in keeping him down.

Friend: It may be as Your Holiness says, but I only desired to point out that he was far better than most of us.

H. H.: It may be so (turning to the lawyer). Yours is an independent profession. You have not the disadvantages which service under a master entails.

L.: Certainly so, but I sometimes feel that service is preferable.

H. H.: Why?

L.: It is no doubt true that we have no master as such, but it is a misnomer to call our profession an independent profession, for we are never masters of ourselves. We are really at the mercy of our clients and the judges. We have no single master but every client that pays for our services becomes our master; and we have also to adjust ourselves to the whims and vagaries of each judge.

H. H.: You are at least the master of your own time. It is not necessary for you to apply for leave when you need a holiday. You can, if you so desire, refrain from attending the court; those who are in service cannot do that.

L.: Certainly we may do so, but that means loss of work and therefore loss of income. Further, in the morning hours we have to take instructions from our clients; and often far into the night we have to study and prepare for the next day's cases. We have to attend courts during the rest of the day. How then can we say that we are masters of our time?

H. H.: How much time then do you ordinarily devote for your ablutions and divine worship in the mornings?

L.: Normally, not more than an hour.

H. H.: You can work wonders in an hour. But I suppose you have to put up with disturbance by the members of your family, your friends or your clerks

calling for business which they think too urgent and important to admit of delay till your devotional activities are over.

L.: I must confess I have such disturbances frequently.

H. H.: There is nothing strange in it, for even I who have no business in your sense of the word have to put up with disturbance by well-meaning devotees or servants.

L.: Our case is worse. We have practically no time which we can call ours.

H. H.: I suppose that in the course of your professional work you have very often to acquaint yourself with the private troubles and worries of your clients who seek your help for remedying them.

L.: That is our main function.

H. H.: No doubt the client pays you for the trouble you take on his behalf, but I have heard that sometimes the lawyer may have himself to find the money for a client or suggest to him the means of getting it. If so, the lawyer has to shoulder some of the financial troubles also.

L.: It does so happen sometimes.

H. H.: The larger the number of clients, the greater and the more acute will be your burden of worry for their sake.

L.: It is so.

H. H.: It means that practically you may not have much time left to devote to your own personal affairs.

L.: It is unfortunately so. We have to leave the management of the household to womenfolk or to young boys of the family and of the office to our clerks. We have no time to supervise them.

H. H.: The gentlemen who are in other professions find time, I suppose, to attend to all this.

L.: Certainly.

H. H.: That is, by the peculiar nature of your profession you find less time to devote to personal matters than those in other professions.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: You have less opportunity, therefore, to contract or cultivate the habit of selfishness. It is really a very great advantage, if only you begin to view it in that light. Instead of complaining that you have no time to devote to personal concerns, you must learn to congratulate yourself on that fact, as it deprives you of the chances of selfishness taking root in you.

L.: It is no doubt an advantage viewed in that light. But it is really ridiculous that we should waste our brains and life in worrying for others.

H. H.: Do you waste your brains for any client who does not engage you?

L.: Certainly not.

H. H.: You tax your brains only for the client who engages you.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: Do you worry yourself about his case if you do not get or expect any fees?

L.: No.

H. H.: Your worrying yourself is therefore not for your clients but for your own gain of the fees.

L.: Certainly.

H. H.: There is nothing ridiculous, I suppose, in your exerting yourself to get some substantial benefit for yourself.

L.: Of course none, if the matter is put that way.

H. H.: If your fee is secure, I suppose, you do not very much care if you win or lose a case.

L.: How can I say that? I am interested in seeing that I win.

H. H.: Of course, if you win, you will have the mental satisfaction of having won a case; and if you lose you will be sorry to some extent. I did not mean that. If, for example, thanks to your advocacy, your client gets some property or if in spite of your advocacy he loses it, you do not personally share in the gain or loss.

L.: Certainly not.

H. H.: You are not therefore personally interested in your client's getting the property actually, but are interested in trying to the best of your ability to win the case for him.

L.: Quite so.

H. H.: That is, you put forward your best efforts to win the case for your client, leave the judgement and the result to the judge and God and do not worry yourself further.

L.: That is so.

H. H.: You do this almost every day. Don't you ?

L.: We do.

H. H.: Apart from the question of fees and confining our attention to the facts that you put forward your best efforts in conducting a case and that you do not personally very much care about the result of the case, don't you think that your profession is a very good training ground in *nishkāma karma* or desireless action ?

L.: It is no doubt so. But we never stop to consider the matter in this light.

2. SHARPENING OF THE INTELLECT

H. H.: Further, in your profession you daily have the opportunity of pitting your intellect against that of another lawyer, who appears on the opposite side.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: You may also have to use your intellect keenly, if you happen to cross-examine a clever witness on the other side.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: If the judge happens to be dull, you will have to put forth your best efforts to make him understand your position ; if he is intelligent, you will have to answer his searching questions before you can make him come round to your view. In either case, your

intellect and his will have to clash with each other till some finality is reached.

L.: Certainly so.

H. H.: Daily therefore you have to use your intellect as you come into contact with the lawyer on the opposite side, his witnesses and also the judge.

L.: Certainly.

H. H.: A teacher has only to repeat to his student what probably he had himself learnt as a student and has ordinarily no opportunities or necessity of whetting his intelligence. While he has to deal with students, he is dealing only with his inferiors. But in your profession you have to pit your intelligence against more acute brains.

L.: It is so.

H. H.: An instrument which is in constant use can never get rusty.

L.: No.

H. H.: An instrument which is not only in constant use but is being sharpened at every use must get sharper and sharper with every use.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: A lawyer's intellect therefore must get keener and keener as he advances in years, unlike the intellect of persons in other professions, who have ordinarily no such opportunities of keeping them in constant use, much less of sharpening them.

L.: It would seem so.

H. H.: Why seem? It is so. That is why we find the lawyers leading in any society, good or bad; and that is why we find them intellectually very active even in their old age.

L.: Yes, it is so.

H. H.: Thus, your profession has these advantages over others, that you do not have much opportunity for selfishness, that it is a good training ground in *nishkāma karma* and that it gives you unparalleled facilities for refining your intellect.

L.: It is no doubt so, but I had never considered the matter in this light before.

H. H.: Now you will agree with me that advancing age—leave alone senile old age—is no disqualification to a lawyer, but is really a positive advantage as his intellect will become keener.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: A keener intellect means less time to grasp a thing. Does it not?

L.: Certainly.

H. H.: A lawyer therefore can learn many things in the time which others may require for learning a single thing.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: Given the same span of life for all, the lawyer has the chance of learning more things than the others.

L.: It is logically true.

H. H.: To acquire the same knowledge as others or even to acquire more knowledge, he requires less time than others.

L.: That naturally follows.

H. H.: His being seemingly more busy than others in worldly pursuits is not inconsistent with his ability to put to the best advantage the few moments of leisure that he may command.

L.: No.

H. H.: In fact, you will find that the busiest of men will have the most leisure and the laziest will always be short of time, for the former utilise time and the latter only waste it. Now, may I know how you utilise your leisure moments? It cannot be that you spend all your time in your professional work; you must be having some other things to engage yourself, if only for a change.

L.: I study Tamil literature. It is a vast storehouse of priceless teachings.

H. H.: I have no doubt it is. But have you come across any kind of spiritual or religious teaching in the whole of the Tamil literature which does not refer back to the original in Sanskrit?

L.: I have not, though some of the modern Tamil scholars want to make out that the Tamil religion was different from the Āryan.

H. H.: Don't you think you will do well to study the original Sanskrit itself?

L.: But I am getting old and it may not be possible for me to turn to the study of Sanskrit now.

D.G. 5

H. H.: Please don't forget or disturb the conclusion we have already arrived at, namely, that advancing age is not a handicap to a lawyer, but a positive advantage.

L.: But will it be possible ?

H. H.: Try it and then see if it is possible or not. Further, you are a Brāhmaṇa and therefore in duty bound to study Sanskrit. Even in this age of materialism, your parents performed the ceremony of *upanayana* for you ; even in this age of decadent learning, scholars are available who can and will undertake to teach you. You must not let this opportunity go. For, who knows whether these advantages will be available to you in your next birth ?

3. NEED FOR IMMEDIATE EFFORT

L.: I find it very difficult to get good *vaidikas* even for the ordinary religious functions in my house ; and during recent years, disgusted with the behaviour of some of them, I had to cut down some of these functions. While the position is such even for formal ceremonial rites, where can I get really good scholars to teach me ?

H.H.: Do you really believe that the times are getting worse and worse and that the chances of adhering to Dharma are growing less and less ?

L.: Certainly I do.

H. H.: What do you think will be the state of our society say a hundred years hence ?

L.: Infinitely worse.

H. H.: Don't say 'infinitely', for even when the Lord proposes to incarnate at the end of the Kali Yuga, four hundred thousand years and more from now, there will remain some pure *dhārmika* families in which He the Ever Pure can take birth. Say therefore only far worse.

L.: Let it be far worse, then.

H. H.: A man who is born, in the very same place where we are now, a hundred years hence will have therefore far less opportunities of adhering to the Vedic observances or of acquiring right knowledge.

L.: Certainly.

H. H.: A man who hears of a place where no food is available takes care not to go to that place at all. Does he not?

L.: He will certainly avoid going.

H. H.: If however, he has to go, he takes with him supplies sufficient to last him during his stay in that place. Is it not so?

L.: Yes.

H. H.: That is, either he avoids going there altogether or equips himself in time to counteract the disadvantages that he may have to face.

L.: Certainly so.

H. H.: Applying the same reasoning, will you tell me what a person, who is now in the world of the living and may expect to be reborn a hundred years later, is to do, if he really feels that then he may not have the advantages which he now possesses?

L.: He must equip himself now for it.

H. H.: Or avoid being reborn at all ?

L.: Certainly. But how can that be done believing as we do in the inevitability of future births ?

H. H.: Do we believe so, when we postulate that there is a state called *Moksha* which transcends both birth and death ?

L.: Oh ! But *Moksha* is not easily got.

H. H.: Easily or not, I suppose it is attainable by human effort.

L.: Certainly.

H. H.: If it is attainable and if it will free us from all trouble and for ever, is it not our bounden duty to make all possible efforts to attain that state or at least to approximate to that state, to the best of our abilities ?

L.: Certainly it is.

H. H.: If therefore you really and earnestly believe that the few facilities that you now have for spiritual advancement are likely to be wanting a hundred years hence, when you may have your next birth, you must with earnestness and faith and redoubled vigour make the best use of the opportunities available to you now, so that you can escape for ever the need to be reborn.

L.: No doubt it is so ; but it is not possible for such as I to hope for *Moksha* in this life itself.

H. H.: There is no reason at all why you should think yourself incompetent. In any case you will grant that you must equip yourself now as much as you can, so as to prepare yourself for the lesser facilities of the future life a hundred years hence.

L.: Yes.

H. H.: The money, the food and clothing that you may collect in this life here will have to be left behind when you die, and these things can never form any part of the equipment that you will need for your next birth.

L.: No.

H. H.: You know that the only things which accompany the departing soul are Dharma and Adharma. The former is a help and the latter a hindrance. You must therefore in this birth accumulate as much of Dharma as you can and at the same time minimise Adharma as far as possible.

L.: But I find this a very difficult thing, for the surroundings are so bad that it is practically impossible to do a single religious ceremony properly.

H. H.: It may be so. But Dharma is twofold, one which takes the form of ritual that requires a number of persons and accessory things to carry it out and the other *japa*, concentration and introspection which can be done by yourself. The surroundings cannot affect your acquiring this latter kind of Dharma.

L.: Still the spiritual darkness that is over-running our country is very disheartening.

H. H.: The sun sets every evening and the darkness of night envelops the land. But do we all lie down to sleep immediately the sun sets, saying that darkness has come and therefore we are helpless? Do we not, each one of us, light a small lamp and get on with our normal activities as long as we can with the aid of that lamp? If we feel that there is any urgency, we walk miles and miles together during the darkest of nights guided by the flickering light of a torch. We do not stop our work, saying that the sun has set.

L.: That is so.

H. H.: Therefore, if only you feel earnestly and keenly the urgency for escaping from the cycle of birth and death, you will ignore the spiritual gloom prevailing in the land and seek out a guiding torch which will dispel the gloom for you, though it may not do so for the rest of the world. Such a guiding torch is the Guru, your spiritual master. Surrender yourself entirely to him; he will take you by the hand and lead you to the goal; he is not blinded by the enveloping darkness and is sure to guide you aright. But you must have true faith in him.

L.: But where in these days can such a Guru be found?

H. H.: That is an unnecessary question. If you wish for him in all earnestness, he will be before you in no time; but if you require his presence only to enable you to test his competency to be a Guru, he will be farther off than before.

4. THE STUDY OF SANSKRIT

H. H.: Now, to return to our subject. I want you to make the best use of your present Brāhmaṇa birth and undertake the study of Sanskrit.

L.: But why insist on the study of Sanskrit ?

H. H.: There are many things in the Sanskrit sacred literature, especially the concepts of Dharma and Brahman, an accurate conception of which you can never get through translations or adaptations.

L.: Why not ?

H. H.: Is any of your boys studying in the higher classes ?

L.: Why ? One of my sons is in the B.Sc. class.

H. H.: What is the subject which he has taken up for special study ?

L.: Physics.

H. H.: I hear the sound that you make when you pronounce the word. As I do not know the language to which it belongs, it has no significance for me and is no more than a sound or a name to me. Will you please explain it to me in Tamil so that I can grasp its significance ?

L.: It is the science which deals with the forces of nature.

H. H.: I see. It explains how thunder and rain are caused.

L.: No, no. That is done by another science called physiography. This deals with the inter-action of things upon each other.

H. H.: How the betel leaf, lime and nut yield the red colour, if used together ?

L.: No, such things are reserved for another science called chemistry. This deals only with states of motion and states of rest of particular things in relation to others.

H. H.: I now understand. Evidently you can learn from it how the earth, the moon and the stars are kept in their places in space or are made to move ?

L.: No, it is not that. That belongs to the province of another science called astronomy.

H. H.: What then is the exact significance of the English word of which I heard the sound ?

L.: I regret I am unable to convey to you in Tamil the exact significance. There is no corresponding term in Tamil and, even if I begin to define it in so many sentences, I may not be able to convey to you the full sense of the term.

H. H.: It does not matter. Leave Tamil alone. Can you define it accurately in Telugu, Canarese or any other language known to you ?

L.: I fear, not.

H. H.: You mean then that there is a concept of science which has a single word in English to denote it but cannot be accurately defined in other languages, even though you may use several sentences.

L.: I have to say so.

H. H.: Now, I hope you will grant me the same concession if I say that there are concepts which can

be conveyed by single words in Sanskrit, but which can never be defined accurately in other languages.

L.: Now I see there are bound to be such concepts.

H. H.: Brahman is one of them, as it is said to be *aupanishada* or capable of being known only through the Upanishads. Let those, who are not authorised or are otherwise incompetent to read the Upanishads in the original, resort to translations or adaptations. It is problematical if the latter are of any use. But why should you resort to them ? That is my point.

L.: I quite understand and I shall try to conform to Your Holiness' directions.

H. H.: Do so. I say all this only for your own sake. For, what guarantee is there, as I have already pointed out, that you will have the same facilities when you come again into this world ? Make the best use of the opportunities you have at present. If, in spite of your best efforts, you are unable to escape altogether from the cycle of birth and death, you will have, in any case, made yourself strong and prepared for the shortcomings in the facilities that you may have in your next birth. Remember, in this busy world, your profession more than those of others affords opportunities for such a preparation, as I have pointed out before ; and I hope you will profit by them.

L.: I hope to do' so with Your Holiness' gracious blessings.

CHAPTER VI

MARRIAGE REFORM

1. BRIDEGROOM PRICE

A gentleman named Mr. V., who was an earnest disciple of His Holiness but had some leanings towards what is called the social reform movement, once approached him and, in the course of the conversation that ensued, remarked as follows :

V.: Even in these hard times when the Brāhmaṇas find it difficult to eke out a livelihood, money is being spent extravagantly on occasions of marriage. Such expenditure has ruined a large number of well-to-do families and can be minimised if the marriage ceremonies are performed in a single day and not dragged on through four or five days.

H. H.: I quite agree with you that a lot of money is being unnecessarily wasted in the name of marriage functions. But what has that to do with the ceremonies lasting for four or five days ?

V.: The longer the ceremonies are performed, the greater is the expenditure.

H. H.: Certainly not. You are evidently confusing the ceremonies with the *tamasha* which the people choose to have on occasions of marriage. The religious ceremonies cost little. Only a few handfuls of rice and a few *samit* twigs are required. If you confine yourself to these you can have the ceremonies for any

number of days without the least demand on your purse or on your energy. If you choose to arrange for costly music parties, grand dinners and fireworks, it is certainly not the fault of our religion; and there is absolutely no justification for seeking to curtail the innocent and inexpensive religious ceremonies.

V.: Possibly the ceremonies by themselves may not be costly, but the fact of having to entertain friends and relations for all the days till the ceremonies are over is certainly taxing both to our energy and our purses.

H. H.: If you feel so, extend your invitation to them for only the first day. For the succeeding days only the bride and the bridegroom are indispensable. You may send off the others on the morning of the second day.

V.: It will not be polite to do so.

H. H.: I suppose you intend to do it anyhow, if you decide upon a one-day function.

V.: Certainly, but then they will go away of their own accord, when they know that there is to be no function on the second day.

H. H.: Similarly, they will certainly go away of their own accord, if they learn that they are not expected to stay on from the second day. I am sure no decent man will care to trouble you with his company when he knows that he is not wanted. But, after all, is the feeding of your relations and others such a costly affair that you should be so afraid of it? On the other hand, if you analyse the expenses of any modern marriage, I am sure you will find that the

vaidika expenses and the feeding expenses are very low indeed when compared to the other items of expenditure. I do not understand why you want to further curtail these items when there are very many other items which are far more costly and also quite unnecessary and can therefore be safely cut out. Our religion does not ask you to buy expensive cloth for your relations ; it does not ask you to invite all and sundry and give them costly dinners ; it does not ask you to have grand musical entertainments ; and it does not ask you to pay fabulous 'prices' for the bridegrooms. The last item is indeed a very deplorable phenomenon.

V.: Somehow this evil has crept into our society and I request Your Holiness to use the weight of your influence to combat it.

H. H.: Certainly, I am trying my best ; but I fear that the 'weight' of my influence is negligible when compared with the weight of influence of that one who brought this evil and is sustaining it.

V.: Who is he ?

H. H.: Who else than the demon of desire variously called *kāma* and *lobha* ? As long as the *Brāhmanas* continued to be under the influence of their religion and their religious teachers, no such evil was to be found among them. Once they allowed their inherent peace, born of contentment, to be disturbed and made room in their hearts for greed and avarice, a host of evils, this evil of *vara śulka* or bridegroom-price among them, came on. As long as these evils reign in their hearts, no amount of advice or preaching from me or from any other is likely to be heeded, for the powerful

kāma is all the time making effective counter-propaganda.

V.: It may be that the bridegroom's people are actuated by greed or avarice when they demand large sums ; but the sufferer is the bride's party.

H. H.: I can not agree with you when you say that it is only the bridegroom's party that is obsessed by *kāma*. The bride's party is equally so obsessed.

V.: How can it be when that is the party to pay ?

H. H.: Will you please tell me if a girl's father will prefer a *vaidika* boy, who is prepared to take her without a dowry, to the son of an officer who demands two thousand rupees as a condition precedent to accepting the girl ?

V.: I fear not. He would rather sell away his lands, if necessary, to secure the officer's son as his son-in-law.

H. H.: Can you tell me why ?

V.: The reason is evident. Even at some personal inconvenience to himself at present, he would like to have his girl's future happiness secured.

H. H.: Quite so. To put it more clearly, he is coveting the riches of the officer for his own daughter.

V.: Plainly speaking, it is no doubt so.

H. H.: The coveting is therefore not on one side only.

V.: But certainly it cannot be wrong to try to secure the future happiness of one's own daughter even at some inconvenience to oneself ?

H. H.: Certainly not, but it is wrong to assume that her happiness is secured if her husband or her father-in-law is rich. Whatever may be the views held by others, a Brāhmaṇa must know, both by his training and by his experience, that wealth and happiness are not related to each other as cause and effect and that the attempt to secure happiness by securing wealth is as futile as it is absurd. He must also know that when his daughter came into this world the quota of pain and pleasure to be enjoyed by her in this life had already been determined and it is not within his competence, or anybody else's, to add to or take away from that allotment. When he thus forgets himself and incidentally forgets the Supreme Dispenser of all *karma* and when he allows himself to be swayed by the mean desire for mere wealth as an end in itself, he begins to suffer.

V.: But what is the remedy which Your Holiness proposes for getting rid of this evil of *vara śulka*?

H. H.: The only hope lies in the Brāhmaṇas' regaining their old peace and contentment.

V.: I fear that it may not be possible in the present condition of society.

H. H.: Then the only alternative remedy is the Brāhmaṇas' being reduced to a state of abject poverty, when nobody will think of asking another to pay, because none will be able to pay.

V.: I fear that there is every chance of such a *sād* state of affairs prevailing in the near future.

H. H.: I hope it is not so bad as that and that the Brāhmaṇas will recover their senses before it is too late.

2. EARLY MARRIAGE

V.: Some of us think that the insistence on the marriage of girls being performed at an early age, in any case before maturity, is mainly responsible for the evil of *vara śulka* or bridegroom-price.

H. H.: How can that be? Early marriage has been in vogue from the dawn of Hindu society and this system of bridegroom-price is only of recent date. How then can this evil be attributed to early marriage? There is absolutely no connection between the two. But some interested people, who prefer late marriages, wantonly discredit early marriage by attributing to it ever so many evils which have not the remotest connection with it. It is only a pet fad of the social reformer and has no foundation at all in fact. It seems to me, on the other hand, that if the girls are married late the bridegroom-price is very likely to go higher.

V.: Now that we have touched upon early marriage, may I know Your Holiness' opinion on the recent legislation passed about it?

H. H.: It is not for me to pronounce an opinion on a matter about which the *Śāstras* are positive. In fact this is not something about which anybody's opinion has any value or relevancy. The Śruti and the Smṛiti, which alone are our guides in religious matters, are above all the temporal governments and the latter have

absolutely no right or justification to interfere with them on any account. The present Government has done the greatest blunder in seeking to make such a law by simply counting the number of votes.

V.: But the Government has interfered and has also made the law. What are the people to do ?

H. H.: That is a matter which each man has to decide for himself—whether he prefers to suffer the penalties mentioned in the Śāstras or to suffer the penalties threatened to be imposed by the Government.

V.: In either case, he has to suffer. Will not the fact that he is violating the Śāstras only under the compulsion of the Government excuse him in the eyes of God ?

H. H.: Certainly not. Even in your secular law, the fact that you were compelled to commit a crime by another stronger than yourself will not entitle you to an acquittal. If you choose to avoid a present inconvenience and risk a greater inconvenience in the future, it is purely an act of your volition and you must be prepared to take the consequences. There is no justification for throwing the blame on others.

V.: The persons who are responsible for this legislation sincerely think that it is necessary in the interests of the people themselves.

H. H.: It may be so. I take it then that impliedly they think that the Śāstras which enjoin on us early marriage are not in the interests of the people.

V.: They may have been useful formerly but are not useful now. They have to be changed.

H. H.: That is, in their opinion, the Śāstras (which word means 'those that command') are really *śāsyas* ('those that are to be commanded') at the will or whim of the legislator. That is a proposition which we, who believe in our Dharma being *sanātana*, i.e. eternal, and therefore immutable, can never assent to. Further, no government, howsoever powerful, has any right to compel the people to break their religious laws by threatening them with temporal punishment.

V.: The majority of those responsible for this law do not believe in the immutability of the Śāstras and some of them do not believe in the Śāstras at all.

H. H.: Then they have no right to call themselves Hindus nor can they assume the right to legislate for the Hindus.

V: Though some attempt was made to show that the Śāstras themselves sanctioned late marriages, it was not seriously pressed. Their main justification was in the temporal happiness of the people.

H. H.: It is extremely doubtful if temporal happiness is at all secured by such means. Assuming that it is secured, is it worth doing in view of the risk to their higher happiness in future lives?

V: They ignore this aspect altogether, either because they do not believe in such states of existence or because they do not believe in the Śāstras which point out what acts lead to happiness or misery.

H. H.: Even for this reason they have no right to call themselves Hindus, much less to assume the right to legislate for them.

3. THE WIDOW PROBLEM

H. H.: Apart from this, how do they expect to secure the temporal happiness of the people by this legislation?

V.: It is a fact that there are in India, especially in Bengal, a large number of child-widows who became widows before they knew what marriage was. This legislation will certainly put a stop to any increase in their number.

H. H.: Evidently the reformer has more pity for these child-widows than for those women who become widows after knowing what marital life is.

V.: It is so.

H. H.: Will you tell me which is more painful, not to have a particular kind of enjoyment or to have it for a time and then lose it?

V.: Certainly the latter.

H. H.: Why does our reformer friend ignore this principle in the case of widows? Those who have known what marital happiness is and have lost it, are really to be pitied more. Further, which is the more poignant pain, to lose a thing which you have seen for a single day or to lose a thing which you have loved and owned for years together?

V.: The latter, no doubt.

H. H.: The sorrow of a woman who loses her husband in the prime of her life must therefore be more intense than that of a girl who loses her husband soon after she makes his acquaintance. It would seem therefore that such widows have a better claim to our pity. But the reformer does not choose to concern himself with them.

V.: He has pity for them also and that is why he would encourage the marriage of widows, young and old.

H. H.: Evidently, the word widow jars upon his ears and so he wants to reduce the number of widows in this country.

V.: It is so.

H. H.: Why should he take all this trouble to reduce the number of widows? He can as well get a legislation passed that there shall be no more widows in India.

V.: But that is an impossibility.

H. H.: Why?

V.: We cannot stop husbands from dying.

H. H.: But you can stop women becoming widows.

V.: How can that be done?

H. H.: It is only a wife that can become a widow. Why not stop marriages altogether, so that no girl can ever be a wife, much less a widow?

V.: Perhaps they are attempting some such step in the advanced countries of the West. God forbid that such a phase of social reform be introduced into our land !

H. H.: What else is your reformer driving at ? You have told me that it is impossible to stop husbands from dying. I may take it also that it is equally impossible to increase the number of men who are fit to be husbands.

V.: Yes.

H. H.: Your legislation therefore does not and cannot affect the number of eligible husbands. That number remains more or less constant.

V.: Yes.

H. H.: Your reformer wants some of them to take elderly widows for their wives and a large number of them to take young widows for wives.

V.: He does.

H. H.: The remaining men only will be available for the marrying virgins.

V.: Quite so.

H. H.: The number of persons who are available for marrying the virgins has therefore decreased.

V.: Yes.

H. H.: But the number of virgins available for marriage has not decreased ?

V.: Certainly not.

H. H.: By saving so many elderly and young widows from leading lives of widowhood, through

this legislation the reformer has now increased the number of virgins available for marriage.

V.: It seems so.

H. H.: Thus by this legislation and allied endeavours he has lessened the number of persons available for marrying virgins and at the same time increased the number of virgins available for marriage.

V.: It is so.

H. H.: The only consequence will be that in future many more virgins will have to remain unmarried than now.

V.: I see, it must be so.

H. H.: Again, as the number of husbands remains more or less constant, the number of husbandless women must be equally constant.

V.: Certainly.

H. H.: Therefore this so-called reform cannot possibly increase the number of the married couples. It may decrease the number of widows but will increase the number of unmarried girls. In any case therefore, the number of husbandless women remaining unaffected, what does it matter to him whether they are *vidhavās* (widows) or *kanyās* (unmarried) so long as both are *adhavās* (husbandless)? Further, by reducing the chances of virgin girls finding husbands, he is depriving them not only of the chances of conjugal life but even of the opportunity of the obligatory *samskāra* of *vivāha* (marriage sacrament). As *upanayana* is obligatory on the boys of the twice-born castes, so is *vivāha* obligatory on the girls of all castes, espe-

cially of the twice-born castes. Even a child-widow has had at least that *samskāra* performed for her and she has attained full caste status. But an unmarried girl cannot attain that status unless that *samskāra* is performed for her at the proper time. By reducing the chances of that *samskāra* being performed, the reformer is denying to a large number of girls, who are born in caste, the opportunity of attaining full caste status and is therefore disqualifying them from taking part in religious functions. To go without the necessary *samskāra* is a great calamity in the eyes of our religion and the reformer is forcing that calamity on a large number of innocent girls. Before his advent, there was no girl throughout the length and breadth of India who went without that *samskāra*. Every one of them had her spiritual interests safeguarded. Now they are deliberately ignored and neglected in the so-called interests of widows.

4. THE REAL REMEDY

V.: I am sure Your Holiness is next to none in your sympathy for the pitiable state of those young girls who lose their husbands. But, is it your advice that we must let things alone and not attempt to find any remedy ?

H. H.: Why do girls become widows ?

V.: I suppose Your Holiness means that it is their *karma* and that they must suffer for it.

H. H.: I have purposely refrained from making any reference to *karma* and I do not want you to

mention it in a purely secular discussion. Leave *karma* alone and answer my question.

V.: The question, why do girls become widows ?

H. H.: Yes.

V.: How can such a question be answered ? They become widows as their husbands happen to die, I suppose.

H. H.: Quite so. That is the only right answer. Now answer my another question. If you are earnest about seeing that there are less widows in future, what is logically the only means of ensuring it ?

V.: Evidently you want me to answer—'We must see that less husbands die.'

H. H.: Certainly. No other effective solution is possible.

V.: But is it possible to prevent people from dying ?

H. H.: Why not, if we leave out of account any considerations of *karma* or fate ? Do you not take measures to reduce mortality and do you not take measures to ensure sanitation and healthy life ? Why don't you exert yourself equally to save husbands from premature death ?

V.: I suppose that late marriage for boys is itself a preventive against premature death.

H. H.: It cannot be, unless it is also preceded by a strict life of healthy *brahmacharya*. If you marry your boys late without removing the great strain which

you unnecessarily impose on them in the name of modern education ; without seeking to correct their bad habits, which every moment sap their life-blood and without any attempt to regulate their pre-marital life on pure healthy lines, physical, mental and spiritual, you will not really be saving them at all. Further, even in married life there are various rules of conduct the observation of which is necessary and which also go by the name of *brahmacharya*. Leave alone therefore the cause of the young widows and espouse instead the cause of the poor boys who become husbands and meet with premature death. It is really they that call for your sympathy and active help. Take them on hand and help them to be healthy and strong in all respects. If you save them from premature death, the problem of young widows gets automatically solved. There is absolutely no need to find fault with the Sāstras or to seek to alter them. You will find on the other hand that it is the disobedience of the Sāstras that has brought all this evil. Restore them to their rightful throne of authority. All will be well.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS NEUTRALITY

1. A CONTRAST

In the course of a conversation with His Holiness one evening, a gentleman who was an officer of the Government happened to remark :

Officer : I see a large number of people nowadays complaining that we have fallen on bad days and that it is not possible to observe Dharma properly. But personally I think that the modern times under the British rule are really conducive to the performance of Dharma. If we do not perform it, it is our own fault. We have absolutely no reason to throw the blame on the Government which is neutral on religious matters.

H. H.: What do you mean by the term neutral ?

O.: The British Government is neutral in the sense that it does not in any way interfere with our religious faiths or practices. This is in striking contrast with the previous Muslim rule, when there was severe religious persecution and people had to run away from their homes if they wanted to save their faith.

H. H.: Evidently you have taken your facts from the books taught to you in modern schools. Though there may be some basis for them, they are mostly written with a political bias and with a view to

create in the mind of the reader an exaggerated opinion of the advantages that obtain under the British rule. The authors have made the contrast more striking with a view to condemn the previous governments. However, apart from the question of correctness of the facts stated by you and assuming them to be true, what follows from them ?

O.: If the facts are true, certainly the present Government with its attitude of religious neutrality and toleration is preferable to the previous governments by Muslim rulers.

H. H.: That conclusion does not follow at all for more reasons than one. When the Muslims invaded this country, they set up a rule of their own, it is true ; but they came here to settle down, not simply to get what they could and return back to their native country. They made this country their home and very soon forgot that they had any other homeland. When they settled here their interests came to be identical with those of the sons of the soil. The prosperity and safety of the rulers depended upon the prosperity and safety of the people. They therefore laid roads, built bridges and undertook extensive works of irrigation for the benefit of the people. They tried their best to establish a peaceful and contented rule, for they knew that their security rested on the peace and contentment of the people.

O.: It must have been so.

H. H.: When they taxed the people and collected revenue for public purposes or for their own enrich-

ment, they took care to see that they did not alienate the feelings of the people. Further, as they did not take away the money collected by them to any place outside this country and as money has no use unless it is spent, it had necessarily to be spent in this country itself and came back to the people themselves in the form of wages and profits. There was thus no drain from the country.

O.: I see there could not have been.

H. H.: Now consider the present state of things. The present rulers have never had any idea of making this country their home. Even if they had such an idea they could never carry it out in practice in the midst of the teeming millions that inhabit here. They have therefore always looked upon it purely as a fruitful source of income for enriching the coffers of their native country. If they provide good roads and railways and other facilities to the people, they never lose sight of their own interests and use these means for exporting valuable raw materials from here. Their aim has always been to enrich their own people at the cost of this country.

O.: No doubt so. It is not altruism that brought the English to India.

H. H.: This is so far as the secular interests of the people are concerned. Now turn to their spiritual interests. The Muslim rulers had staunch faith in their own religion. They firmly believed in God. They believed also that God was common to all the people of the world, irrespective of race or country. They

argued with perfect faith and earnestness in this manner: 'It is the bounden duty of all to seek God, their maker. Our prophet in whom we have implicit faith has taught us the way to seek God. It has pleased God to entrust to our care the destinies of the people of India. He must have had some divine purpose in doing so. Evidently that purpose is that they also must be taught by us the proper way to seek Him. A king is responsible not only for the secular interests of his subjects but also for their spiritual welfare. He will be failing in his duty if he confines his attention only to the former and neglects the latter altogether. We shall therefore carry out our sacred trust by trying to convert these people to our true faith by persuasion if possible and even by compulsion, if necessary.' With such ideas the Muslim rulers embarked upon the work of converting the people to Islam. What was wrong in this attitude of theirs?

O.: Certainly none, if viewed in this light.

H. H.: Now; what does the present Government do? It says 'I am concerned only with the revenue. Even in secular matters, my interests will be preferred to the people's. In the field of religion I am neutral. That is, I do not care a bit how the people fare. It does not matter the least to me if they go to Heaven or to Hell so long as the taxes are properly paid. If they are not paid, I have enough strength to realise that payment. That is my only concern'. Is that not so?

O.: Bluntly speaking, it is so. The British Government, however, does not confess to religious indifference, but really takes credit for religious toleration

H. H.: Such a toleration is not much different from indifference. Call it toleration or indifference; in either case, it is really an attitude of perfect callousness in the matter of religion. Can such an attitude be sincerely maintained by any one who has the slightest faith in God and in the need to attain Him?

2. TOLERATION MISCONCEIVED

O.: Does Your Holiness mean that the rulers must enforce their own faith upon the people?

H. H.: Certainly not. I only desired to point out that there was nothing objectionable or illogical in the attitude of the Muslim rulers, even if they resorted to forcible conversion. Their attitude was really dictated by a deep faith in God and in their prophet and, compared with the present regime, was in fact very praiseworthy. Today God is altogether ignored.

O.: Even assuming that the attitude of Muslim rulers was well-intentioned, it must have caused great hardship to our ancestors.

H. H.: Certainly. But it was also useful in two ways. Those Hindus whose faith in their religion was somewhat lukewarm were easily converted by the promise of worldly benefits, or by threat of worldly punishment, to a faith which was comparatively free from restrictions. They embraced Islam and remained no more a part of the Hindu society.

O.: How was this a benefit? It was really a loss to the Hindu society.

H. H.: Certainly not. The weak and unhealthy elements in our society were taken out of it bodily with the result that the rest of the society remained strong and healthy. It is no doubt a painful experience and a physical loss to have an abcess operated upon and the poisonous matter taken out. It must, similarly, have caused our ancestors great pain to see anybody being taken out of the Hindu fold thereby reducing their number. But such an operation is necessary, and in the ultimate result, very beneficial, if we want to secure strength and health for the rest of the body. The strength and health of a society, as much as of a body, do not depend upon its size or the number of its component parts, but upon its vitality and its freedom from weakness or disease. Those whose adherence to our faith was only a lip-service and who had not the stamina to resist other influences were well out of our fold. To lose them was no loss at all. Now look at the present state of society where there is religious toleration, as you call it. A man may be at heart a Muslim or a Christian ; he may dress like either of them and adopt their manners and be as un-Hindu as possible. Yet he is a Hindu, and you have no right to call him a non-Hindu, except at the risk of legal proceedings being taken against you. The habits of your neighbour or of your own brother may be most revolting to your orthodox tastes ; but you are bound to tolerate him in your village or in your home itself. He may behave with you in the most intolerant manner and may scoff at your traditional practices and habits of life ; but you cannot even resent his behaviour for that will be a sign of bigotedness according to modern notions. So you must allow him to be in your midst

and give him all facilities to contaminate your home and your children. This is modern toleration.

O.: I fear it is so. But it only betrays the lack of strength in our society and can certainly cast no reflection on the Government.

H. H.: How can a society be strong or be able to enforce its decisions upon erring members, if the Government does not support it, but, on the other hand, does everything calculated to undermine its influence?

O.: Certainly, the Muslims did not support our society in this sense?

H. H.: Not always. Very often, they did not do so intentionally, but quite unintentionally and in effect they did strengthen our society. By openly declaring war on our religion they steeled our nerves for opposition. We strengthened our forces, for we knew that we had to face an enemy. We viewed with great suspicion the slightest disturbing element. The village autonomy, the caste autonomy and the religious autonomy became wide awake and strong. They armed themselves well and in time to meet an expected attack. It was an open war and the spirit of defence gave us strength. This was the other positive benefit that we had during the Muslim rule.

O.: I fail to see how it was a benefit or how it was preferable to the peaceful life of modern times.

H. H.: When you know that you have an enemy to encounter, you arm yourself to meet him. It is always preferable to meet the foe in an open field of

battle ; it is very difficult to fight the foe who is by your side and masquerading as a friend. It is easier to fight a tiger openly attacking you than to fight a poison which, unknown to you, has entered your blood and is sapping your life slowly but unfailingly.

O.: Certainly, it is so.

H. H.: In the Muslim regime, we knew our enemy and therefore armed ourselves to be ready to meet his onslaught. But in modern times we have no known enemy. Everybody says that he is not opposing us. We are effectively disarmed by this proclaimed lack of opposition. In our false sense of security we have grown weaker and weaker. The slow poison of un-Hindu thought and manners has entered our blood ; and the most pitiable part of it is that we do not and would not realise that it is a poison. Such a phenomenon was impossible under the Muslim rule.

3. *EQUAL SUPPORT FOR ALL*

O.: Does Your Holiness then desire that the present Government should openly declare itself as an enemy of Hinduism ?

H. H.: In our own interests I would by far prefer that to its present enervating attitude of so-called religious neutrality.

O.: Or, does Your Holiness desire that it should actively support the cause of Hinduism as against other religions ?

H. H.: I know that it is not practicable.

O.: Quite so. The rulers are professedly Christians and the subjects belong to so many varied religious denominations that it will not be possible for them to take sides with any religion in particular.

H. H.: But that cannot prevent them from extending equal support to all religions?

O.: That is just what they are doing.

H. H.: There you are mistaken. They are not extending equal support to all religions, but are withholding support equally from all, and they call that religious neutrality.

O.: How can they extend support to any religion which is not theirs? It will be asking them to do something quite against their convictions.

H. H.: I am not suggesting for a moment that they should make grants in furtherance of a particular religion or that they should see to the enforcement of the respective religious duties of their subjects.

O.: How else can they extend their support?

H. H.: By maintaining an attitude of perfect non-interference in religious matters and safeguarding at the same time perfect religious autonomy to the subjects.

O.: Does not the present Government do both? It does not interfere at all in religious matters and it does safeguard to us our freedom in religious matters.

D.G. 7

H. H.: In theory it may be so, but certainly not in fact. Let me explain. The alien rulers and those even among us who have been trained to think like them, have no conception at all of our system of life and thought. They think that religion is something abnormal, and has no relation to the activities of life. To the true Hindu, however, religion is life itself and has to find expression in every aspect of it. The so-called distinction between social questions and religious questions does not exist for him. The Government, accustomed as it has been to viewing religion as mere a fraction of life, cannot understand how marriage, parentage, communion with others, inheritance and the like can have any religious significance. It therefore interferes with such things, declaring that it does not thereby interfere in religious matters. Its professed attitude of non-interference in religious matters is a pure myth, at least as regards the Hindu. I may mention in passing that no such interference was ever attempted, much less carried out, during the regime of Muslims. Concerning the safeguarding of our religion, the only way in which it can be safeguarded is by strengthening the hands of those who are entrusted with the duty of seeing that the followers of a particular faith properly perform their functions; in other words the secular power of the Government should be available, whenever requisitioned, for enforcement of the decisions of the acknowledged heads of each community.

O.: We cannot expect a Christian government to enforce the obedience of Hindus to the Hindu religion.

H. H.: Why not?

O.: I feel sure that the Muslim rulers would never have done anything of that sort.

H. H.: You are again mistaken. I know for certain that there are letters preserved in the Śringerī Matha which have been addressed to the then reigning Āchāryas by the Muslim rulers of Mysore and Hyderabad and which specifically mention that directions had been issued to the officers of their governments to see that the orders of the Āchāryas in religious matters are strictly enforced and obeyed.

O.: I did not think that possible.

H. H.: Naturally, because your impression of the Muslim rulers has been formed from a coloured source. You will be more surprised to learn that in one of the letters from Tippu Sultān himself to the Matha,

In 1794 A.D. Tippu Sultān issued an order to Sardār Syed Mahomed, an officer of his government, that the Āchārya of the Śringerī Matha should be 'enabled to enquire into the conduct of his disciples who may have neglected the performance of their religious duties'.

The Nizām of Hyderabad in an order dated 1779 A.D. directs that 'the property of such disciples of the Matha as may die without heirs shall vest in the Matha', and adds that 'the Swāmi is supreme in the matter of the performance on the part of his disciples of their respective duties'.

In another communication addressed to the Śringerī Āchārya himself by the Nizām in 1843 A.D. he mentions, 'Your Reverence is supreme in the matter of enquiring into and establishing in their respective religious duties the several sectarians of the eighteen castes' and says also that he has ordered 'that none should disobey the authority of the Guru in the matter of religion'.

he had requested the Āchārya to arrange for the necessary religious rites to be performed in the Śrī Śāradā Temple at his expense for securing him victory in an impending battle.

O.: I am really very much surprised to hear this. Tippu was known to be a great fanatic, who did his utmost to forcibly convert the Hindus to Islam.

H. H.: As I told you, not much faith can be placed on such stories. Don't overlook the indisputable facts—the letters written by Tippu to the Matha and his retaining with him Pūrṇaiya, a Brāhmaṇa Minister, to the end of his life. He may have committed excesses, but, as I have already pointed out, even they must have been due to his intense faith in God and in his own religion as the only means of attaining Him.

4. NEED FOR SECULAR SUPPORT

O.: Whatever may have been done by the Muslim rulers, it is impossible to expect any active support from the present Government in the way in which Your Holiness wants it.

H. H.: Then I fear we shall have to wait for the advent of another government which can give us sympathy and support.

O.: Why so? Why does Your Holiness place so much importance on secular support?

H. H.: That has been the lesson of all history. When the Lord himself incarnated in this land as Śrī

Śankarāchārya for the preservation and propagation of our religion, He thought it necessary to seek and obtain the secular support of King Sudhanvā. When the all-knowing sage Śrī Vidyāranya sought to restore the Vedic religion to its old glory, he found it necessary to establish at first the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar to support him in his endeavours. His Holiness the late Āchārya of Śringerī, in consecrating the image of Śrī Śankarāchārya at Kāladi, his birth-place, had said : 'Even if I get the intellect and the capacity of the Great Master, I can do nothing to safeguard our religion unless I get also the support of a king like Sudhanvā.' As it is, we are practically helpless.

O.: It seems to me that Your Holiness virtually agrees with the present national movement which demands a change of government.

H. H.: That does not necessarily follow. I should very much desire a change of attitude on the part of the Government rather than a change of the Government itself. Further, if we look at the persons who lead the so-called national movement and the methods they adopt, it seems to me that it will be disastrous to our religion if by chance they acquire the reins of government in their hands. None of them has any regard for any religion ; the few that profess such regard have only a formal sense of allegiance to their religion which will disappear in no time if it conflicts with their cherished views of what they consider beneficial to national interests.

O.: But your condemnation of the present regime is not a bit less than theirs.

H. H.: It may be so, but they condemn the Government because it is an alien one and because they want to get the power in their own hands. It does not matter the least to me if the reins of government are in the hands of aliens or the sons of the land. I care nothing for the personnel or the nationality or the religion of the rulers. I only want that they must afford every facility to a Hindu to live the life of a Hindu, a Muslim to live the life of a Muslim, a Parsi to live the life of a Parsi, and so on. Religious neutrality or tolerance is meaningless. There must be perfect religious equality, as I have already defined—each man to his religion unmolested by anybody and every facility guaranteed to him to practise his own religious pursuits. To reduce all people to a uniform level of no religion or irreligion is not religious neutrality. It is annihilation of religion itself. I hope that before long the Government will realise that its security lies really with those citizens who desire to lead a life of peace and contentment and perfect freedom in matters of religion and not with the clamouring few who are after excitement for excitement's sake and seek unbridled licence in the name of freedom of thought and action. Believing as I do that the interests of our religion are quite safe in the hands of the Lord in spite of the several attacks that are being made on it, I am content to wait and see what the future has in store for us.

I find it necessary to append a few remarks to this chapter lest any hasty reader should misconstrue some of the matters touched upon here. The main object of this dialogue is to

draw attention to the need for insisting upon what are called 'religious safeguards'. No religion can possibly live, much less thrive, if its adherents are handicapped in its practice. The orthodox Hindus as a class are by nature, training and faith one of the most peace-loving and loyal classes of citizens that the world has ever known. They are also the least politically minded. They have been content to leave all political problems in the hands of the vociferous English-educated few. Taking advantage of this fact and actuated by a desire to imitate the West, the latter from their seats in the Parliament, Assemblies and other bodies seem to be bent upon taking action detrimental to the interests of the vast body of Hindus. As pointed out in the above dialogue, the security of the Government lies really with the orthodox people who desire to lead a life of peace and contentment and perfect freedom in matters of religion and not with the clamouring few. I desire also to point out that the defence of forced conversion in this dialogue was made from the standpoint of the Muslim rulers only and not from any absolute standard of right and wrong. The orthodox Hindu, believing as he does that the religion in which a man is born is the best fitted for his spiritual uplift, does not countenance any conversion, even voluntary conversion, or even conversion to Hinduism. Vide Chapter I, he can never approve of any forced conversion. This will be clear also from the emphatic answer 'Certainly not' to the question 'Does Your Holiness mean that the rulers must enforce their own faith upon the people?'—R. K.

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA

1. IGNORANCE NO EXCUSE

A gentleman in a high social position once remarked to His Holiness :

G.: We who have been given only secular education from our boyhood may be excused if due to our ignorance of the dictates of Dharma we sometimes err. It seems to me that the Pandits who cannot have any such excuse but still err are more culpable than we.

H. H.: Apparently, it is no doubt so. You err because of your ignorance, but they err in spite of their knowledge. Their sinning, certainly, seems more grievous. But you lose sight of the other aspect.

G.: What is that ?

H. H.: They have learnt what is Dharma but only do not carry it out in practice. You have neither learnt nor are you practising Dharma. To their single omission of practice, you have to answer for the two omissions of learning as well as practice. It would seem therefore that your sin is really the greater of the two.

G.: It would be, if ignorance were by itself a sin.

H. H.: Ignorance by itself is certainly no sin, but it is a sin when there is a duty to learn.

G.: How is that ?

H. H.: The animals and young children have no conception at all of the right or wrong, nor have they the ability to form any such conception. With them ignorance is inevitable and therefore is not a sin. But when the child grows up into a boy and is able to understand the distinction between right and wrong, he becomes responsible for his actions and incurs sin if he acts wrongly.

G.: Quite so, for he then knows that what he is doing is wrong.

H. H.: I did not say that he knows that he is doing something wrong ; it is sufficient if he has the capacity to know. Take for instance your penal laws. Does the court let go an offender even though it finds that he did not know the law when he committed an offence ?

G.: These are man-made laws and therefore artificial. If ignorance were allowed as an excuse, everybody will begin to plead ignorance and it would be practically impossible to convict anybody. So it is necessary to place the deliberate offender and the ignorant offender in the same category, though of course some leniency is ordinarily shown to the latter while awarding the punishment. In the field of Dharma or God-made Law, where He retains in His hands the power to assess sin or virtue, He must certainly know whether a man is doing an act wilfully or through ignorance.

H. H.: He does know it but what do you want Him to do ?

G.: He must punish only those who sin deliberately and not those who do an act without knowing that it is sinful.

H. H.: Does fire refuse to scorch a young child who touches it without knowing that it will scorch ?

G.: But fire is an inanimate thing which cannot distinguish between a child and an adult ; we cannot certainly compare the All-knowing God with the blind nature.

H. H.: Evidently you forget that the law that fire will scorch is not an artificial law but is a God-made law.

G.: It may be a God-made law but it is carried out by the blind nature.

H. H.: God entirely withdrawing Himself from it and keeping quite aloof ?

G.: It would seem so.

H. H.: Certainly not. God can never withdraw Himself or be absent or blind at any time. Even in allowing the child to be scorched, He is carrying out His own divine law. Evidently when the child was an adult in a previous birth, he had committed some sin which deserved and necessitated this scorching now.

G.: If Dharma is as inexorable as the laws of nature, in as much as both are God-made, ignorance

can certainly be no excuse ; but Your Holiness said that a young child does not incur sin if he commits a wrong. How can that be ? If fire scorches a child in spite of its ignorance, so must Adhârma injure a child in spite of its ignorance.

H. H.: And so it does. That is why a large number of *samskâras* or purificatory rites are prescribed to be performed for the child, and that is why the parents of the child are enjoined the duty of safeguarding its spiritual interests. As the parents have to feed a child which cannot feed itself, so have they to look after its spiritual interests also till it is able to take care of them. If the parents neglect to take proper care of their child, they incur sin and the child grows weak and sickly. If the parents neglect to take care of its spiritual interests, here again they incur sin and the child is seriously crippled spiritually. So Adharma does injure a child.

G.: But Your Holiness mentioned before that a child is saved from incurring sin because of its ignorance.

H.H.: Not exactly so. The child is saved because of its incapacity to know, that is what I said.

G.: Whatever it be, the child incurs no sin but does not escape injury. How can that be ? If there is no sin, there can be no resultant injury.

H. H.: That is quite true. But I did not say that the injury it now sustains is the result of the present act of committing a wrong. It is but a part of the major *karma* which gave the child its birth as the child

of such parents. The immediate neglect by the parents is the occasion and not the cause of the injury, just as proximity to fire is the occasion and not the *karmic* cause of scorching. If we relate, as cause and effect, the culpable neglect by the parents and the injury sustained by the innocent child or the innocent touching of fire and scorching of the hand of the ignorant child, we will be attributing to God flagrant illogicality, if not deliberate inhumaneness.

G.: Really so. But if because of its ignorance the child is exempt from sin for his present actions, is it not reasonable to expect that the period of childhood must be equally exempt from the results of sin committed in previous births ?

H. H.: Certainly not. To commit a sin it is necessary to have the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong ; and this comes only a few years after the birth. But to suffer the result of sin, only the capacity to suffer is required ; and this capacity, namely, the sense of pain and pleasure, is never absent from the child, even when it is in the womb. Once the former capacity of discrimination is attained, the responsibility for his actions immediately attaches itself to him. The fact that he allows that capacity to sleep by reason of ignorance will not lessen that responsibility.

2. DUTY TO LEARN

G.: Is then there no difference between the culpabilities of the one who does not know and therefore errs and of another who does know and yet errs ?

H. H.: There is a lot of difference, but that is a thing which the latter has to take note of and of which the former can not take advantage. There is no doubt that the man who knows and yet errs is a greater sinner, but that is no satisfaction, much less an excuse, for the man who prefers to continue in ignorance and in error.

G.: No man will willingly prefer to continue in ignorance or in error.

H. H.: I am not so sure of that. If a man has the ability to learn, if materials for knowledge are available to him, if teachers are available for teaching him, and yet if he does not learn, what else is it but a wilful continuance in ignorance?

G.: Ordinarily it may be so. But learning of the Dharma is not so simple.

H. H.: Why not? Even now the intelligence which you have inherited from a long line of saints and seers is sharp enough to grasp the subtlest conceptions; even now your parents perform for you the sacred ceremony of initiation; even now there exist innumerable works dealing with Dharma in all its aspects; and even now there exist a large number of competent teachers who will teach you, if only you ask them to do so. What excuse then have you for continuing in ignorance?

G.: It may be, we have none, if only our attention is drawn to our duty to learn; but is there not a corresponding duty on those who know to teach?

H. H.: There is no such absolute duty. Those who know are bound to teach only those who do not know, but seek to know. If they prefer to remain in ignorance, the teachers are not to blame at all for not attempting to teach them.

G.: There may still be persons who are ignorant not because they prefer to be so but because they do not know at all that there is something to learn. How many, for instance, know what an *agnihotra* or a *soma yāga* is? There are many who have not even heard of these terms. Is it not the duty of the *vaidikas* to tell them that there are such things to be performed by the *Brāhmaṇas*?

H. H.: Have those persons ever cared to ascertain what are the duties of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the community to which they profess to belong? They say that they are *Brāhmaṇas* and still want other *Brāhmaṇas* to tell them what a *Brāhmaṇa* ought to do. Is that reasonable, especially when they do not make the slightest attempt to know? Now leave aside for the moment *agnihotra* and other things of that sort. I suppose the most ignorant among you know that it is a sin to tell a lie. You certainly require nobody to teach you that?

G.: Certainly not.

H. H.: Can you say that all those who know that telling a lie is sinful refrain from doing so?

G.: I cannot certainly make such a statement.

H. H.: In spite of the knowledge that telling a lie is sinful people persist in it.

G.: Yes, most of them do.

H. H.: They tell lies not because there is nobody to teach them that lying is a sin, for they know it themselves.

G.: Certainly.

H. H.: When people sin knowing that what they do is sinful, why should you blame others for not teaching them that many other acts of theirs are also sinful? I feel that such a teaching is not going to make any difference in their conduct. Now they err in ignorance; after being taught, they will err deliberately. That will be all the difference perhaps.

G.: Does Your Holiness mean then that it is better for them to remain ignorant?

H. H.: Certainly not. It is their duty to learn, as I have pointed out before. It is not for them to say that they remain in ignorance because somebody-else does not teach them.

G.: Anyhow, in the state of general ignorance of Dharma now prevalent in the country, some organised propaganda is necessary to dispel it.

H. H.: What do you mean by organised propaganda?

G.: A society may be formed for the dissemination of religious knowledge, with centres of work at all important towns and villages and with competent persons to carry on its work.

H. H.: A committee of management should be formed, a scale of subscriptions should be fixed, provision should be made for difference of opinion, and decision should be by the counting of votes, and all that, I suppose ?

G.: Naturally, for these are necessary in any such society.

H. H.: Admission to the society itself should be at the discretion of the persons who start it ; nobody should be admitted who cannot afford to pay anything by way of subscription though he may be otherwise very competent to run the society itself ?

G.: Such persons may be specially exempted from paying any subscription.

H. H.: I have no doubt, they will be. But they become members by sufferance and not by right.

G.: It is so.

H. H.: Suppose I tell you of a society to which persons with competence are admitted automatically and because of their competence alone without requiring assent from the members who already form the society, to which admission is by merit and not because of any admission fee, for which no member need pay any subscription, in which what is right is decided by an immutable absolute standard of right and not by the fluctuating views of the majority of members at particular times, however well-intentioned they may be, and which can never be dissolved or wound up for any cause whatever ? Don't you think that such a society will be far more natural, lasting, practical and effective than the one you propose ?

G.: Certainly it will be, but it is purely a hypothetical one and impossible of realisation.

H. H.: It is not. What else is our Brāhmaṇa community if it is not a society of the sort mentioned by me? In fact, every community in India is such a self-contained compact society and the Hindu caste system as a whole is a major society of which these communities form component parts or branches, as it were. The admission to them is not left to the whim of anybody but is retained in the hands of the All-knowing God Himself who gives them birth in particular communities in accordance with their qualifications acquired in former lives. The rules of the society are all ready-made, definite and unchangeable, unlike the rules of modern man-made associations which change too frequently.

G.: Taking our Brāhmaṇa community, for instance and granting that it is a society by itself, why is it that it is not able to do any collective work now, which an organised society must be able to do?

H. H.: Can any of your modern societies do any useful work if each individual member is particular about his own personal interests and insists upon giving them preference and is prepared to violate the society's rules if they conflict or seem to conflict with his private interests?

G.: Certainly not. If that is the attitude of the members, the society itself will cease to exist before long.

H. H.: Quite so. Similarly, the Brāhmaṇas, or, for the matter of that members of any other community,
D.G. 8

can be collectively useful only if they are prepared to subordinate their personal likes and dislikes to the duties enjoined upon them as Brāhmaṇas or members of any other community. Our country suffers at present not for want of organised societies, because we have in fact the best conceivable society formed for us, but for want of members who are prepared to conform to its rules. Try to increase the number of such members and the society will grow more strong. All your endeavour should be directed towards this end and not to the founding of any new and unstable associations, which are as unnecessary as they are useless for the object you have in view.

3. TEACH BY EXAMPLE

G.: Even for this, some propaganda is necessary.

H. H.: If you feel so, do it.

G.: But what is the use of my propaganda? It will be more effective if it is initiated by Your Holiness.

H. H.: I am sure it is quite the other way. If the *vaidikas* start any such work, you yourself will say 'These people have to live by their priestcraft. Therefore they want us to be religious so that we may help them to get their livelihood. Their advice to us to be religious is therefore with a view to serve their own selfish interests', and on this reasoning you will begin to belittle the value of their advice and will neglect it. If I begin to preach the same thing, you will say to yourself 'Occupying the position of an Āchārya as he does, he is simply carrying out his functions when he asks me to be religious. His advice is a formal routine

thing made to justify his position', and on this reasoning you will be likely to ignore it. If however a purely *laukika* gentleman like yourself asks others to conform to Dharma, they will think thus: 'The gentleman who is asking me to be religious does not stand to gain at all by my being religious, for he is above want himself and has no need to depend for his living on my being religious. He is occupying a high position, has had good modern education and is endowed with a fine intellect. He has absolutely no personal motive in asking me to be religious and he is not a man likely to waste his words. There must therefore be something in his advice, given as it is so disinterestedly', and on this reasoning they will certainly listen to you and be guided by you. Practically therefore all propaganda, assuming it to be necessary, must come only from such like you, if it has to be effective.

G.: I quite see the significance of Your Holiness' words, but still I cannot help thinking that, even for any work to be done by us, lending of your Holiness' name will go very far with the ordinary people.

H. H.: The Lord Himself has given us His commands in the shape of the eternal Vedas, still the people are prepared to disobey Him. The ancient sages have formulated the Smritis for the guidance of the people, still the latter persist in disobeying them. How then do you expect that the people will obey them simply because my name also is mentioned ?

G.: The Almighty God and the Rishis are not visible now, but you in whom the people repose confidence are present before them in flesh and blood ; and

they naturally will pay more attention to your words than to the religious dictates embodied in books.

H. H.: Be it as you like. Wherever you go, tell the people 'The Vedas, the divine commands of Īśvara, have enjoined on you these duties. The Smṛitis of the ancient sages also enjoin the same duties. Perform them properly and reap their benefit. The Āchārya also wants you to do the same'. Let not the people continue in Adharma for want of a word from me in support of the authority of the Vedas and the Smṛitis. You may tell them that the Vedas and the Smṛitis have my emphatic support and that I also enjoin on them the duty to obey them, as you seem to think my injunction specially valuable.

G.: That may not be enough. It will be well if Your Holiness yourself leads a movement for the propagation of Dharma.

H. H.: I have already told you that no such movement can influence the people who persist in Adharma fully knowing it to be Adharma and that such a movement, if any, to be practically useful must really be led by worldly persons like you enjoying high positions in life and not by persons like me whose 'business' is religion. Further, I do not see why you cast any special duty upon me. I am not conscious of ever leading a movement for the propagation of Adharma; if I had at any time done so, it may be my duty now to see that the mischief caused by me is remedied. On the other hand, it seems to me that it is the special duty of such as you, who misled the people away from the path of religion by showing them the glamour of worldly possessions, to lead them to the right path, now that

you have realised the supreme value of Dharma. The ordinary people look up to you as the highest in the land and, as the Lord has said in the Gītā, 'Whatever the highest person does, that alone is done by the others'

G.: That is quite true. Though I fully know that I have absolutely no claim to rank myself among the highest in the Lord's sense, I have noticed that in my younger days when I was not particular about my caste marks or about my daily ablutions, the clerks who were working under me began to show gradually the same indifference to them, and now, when I seem to be orthodox at least to all outward appearances, even those who are quite indifferent at home put on bright caste marks at least when they come to me in the office. They think that they will please me by imitating me.

H. H.: Whatever may be their present motive, it is quite patent that when you are religious in your conduct those who look up to you as a superior, whether in home life or in official life, begin to be religious in their conduct.

G.: It is no doubt so.

H. H.: By being religious therefore you not only benefit yourself but also others, who follow your example.

G.: Certainly.

H. H.: By being religious, therefore, you get a twofold benefit : one the benefit you directly obtain by being religious yourself and the other the merit you obtain for inducing others to be religious.

G.: No doubt so.

H. H.: Now consider the other side. By being irreligious you will be sustaining a twofold injury : one the injury you directly sustain by being irreligious yourself and the other the sin you incur for inducing others by your example to be irreligious.

G.: Naturally.

H. H.: Ordinary people get the fruits of their own individual conduct alone. But persons who are placed in high positions and influence the conduct of others have a double responsibility. They are answerable not only for themselves but also for others. Just as their merit is the greater when they adhere to Dharma, so is their sin the greater when they resort to Adharma. If only people like you realise this double responsibility, they will not dare any more to remain in ignorance as regards Dharma, but will seek to know and set, by their example and precept, a standard of right conduct. There will be no further need for talking about propaganda. The future of the land is really in your hands. Realise that well. If you do so, there is no further cause for anxiety.

CHAPTER IX

THE UTILITY OF GOD

1. THE PRIME CAUSE

A young man, Mr. P., a typical product of the modern system of education, was somehow attracted to the presence of His Holiness and was duly introduced to him. In the course of the conversation which ensued, His Holiness asked him :

H. H.: I see that you have a lot of leisure. May I know how you utilise it ?

P.: I cannot say that I utilise it ; it spends itself.

H. H.: Evidently you are not one of those leisured people who complain that time does not pass.

P.: No.

H. H.: I am very glad to hear it. In fact, knowing how precious every moment of our lives is, we must really complain that time does pass very quickly.

P.: I do not complain about the passing of time either.

H. H.: It is only those who waste time that complain of the passing of time. Those who feel that their time is well-spent never have that complaint. Obviously you belong to that class.

P.: I do not think I do. I only know that time has to be spent. Whether it is well-spent or ill-spent does not affect the inevitable passing of time. And there are no absolute standards from which we can say that it has been well-spent or ill-spent.

H. H.: Certainly. But if time is spent in some manner which does not in any way disturb your equilibrium or anybody else's, it gives you some mental repose.

P.: Such a repose is found only in sleep.

H. H.: Quite so. But we cannot sleep always. We seek such mental repose even while awake. It is not possible for us to sit vacant-minded. Our mind has to be given some work. The least harmful work that we can give to it is to think, not of the exciting things which disturb our equilibrium, nor of concrete things which may have a personal relationship to ourselves and may therefore tend to excite our passions, but to think of abstract things, say about the origin of the world and such other things.

P.: That will be giving way to mere speculation.

H. H.: What if it is so? You hurt nobody by it and you give your mind some innocent work. And there are some of us who think that you will be benefiting yourself thereby. Whether we are right or not, it does not matter. You cannot say that there is any harm in such speculation.

P.: But what is the use of it?

H. H.: It helps you to spend time. What more use do you want? If there is some use, as we say,

well and good. If there is none, you do not lose anything. Why not therefore you spend some of your time in studying philosophy and allied subjects, if only to pass the time ?

P.: I have read a few books but I have found them to be mere words, words.

H. H.: What more can you expect in a book ? You must supplement it by your own thinking. Since you have read some books on the subject, you must have formed some idea about such things as the evolution of the universe and the existence of God.

P.: Books do not give us any definite ideas. Each author adopts his own line of speculation and wants to make out that it is superior to every other. Further, in the very nature of things, it is not possible to form any definite idea about such subjects. A writer may present an idea in as definite a form as possible, still there can be no finality about it, for somebody cleverer than he can prove it to be baseless.

H. H.: That is inevitable in all intellectual processes. Apart from minor differences, are the modern thinkers agreed at least on this point that, if the world had a beginning, it had a single undifferentiated cause from which it took its birth ?

P.: I think they are, though they postulate the exact nature of that cause variously. Some think that there was at the beginning a nebulous mass of atoms.

H. H.: So do our *tārīkikas*. Were those atoms at rest or were they active in the pre-creation stage ?

P.: The scientists now tell us that the atoms are never at rest but are incessantly active and ever stored with energy.

H. H.: Are these primary atoms conceived of as particles of gross matter which are kept in motion by a force outside them or are they conceived of otherwise ?

P.: The latest theory is that the atom is itself a gross form of the infinite energy which is inherent in it.

H. H.: Whatever it be, scientists realise that it is energy or force which gives substance or existence to the atom or which rules its activities.

P.: Yes.

H. H.: They will also have to grant that that energy is common to all atoms, is homogeneous and is infinite.

P.: Yes.

H. H.: As energy can be transmuted, there is no reason to suppose that the primal energy in one atom is of a different sort from that in another.

P.: Of course, not.

H. H.: Our hypothesis will therefore be very much simplified if we postulate the existence of a single energy or force which is infinite in capacity and takes on the form of atoms under certain conditions.

P.: The Western scientists also are now approximating to that idea.

H. H.: They will have to, if they are logical. This infinite force then may be taken to be the prime causal material of the universe ?

P.: Yes.

H. H.: But the universe is not mere matter which we can trace to atoms. You and I exist. Apart from our physical bodies which are, of course, matter ; there is the spark of intelligent consciousness in us which cannot come under the category of matter ; and that also has to be explained if a complete explanation of the universe is attempted. How do the scientists seek to explain it ?

P.: The scientists proper concern themselves only with the material universe.

H. H.: But there must have been thinkers who have considered the other aspect also.

P.: Yes, there are some such thinkers but I do not think that they have postulated a prime cause for the intelligent principle in us. They have assumed either that such principles do not exist independent of our bodies or that they are eternal and cannot be traced to another cause.

H. H.: Why did they not consistently assume that the world had no beginning and cannot therefore be traced to a cause ?

P.: The variedness of the world requires some explanation.

H. H.: So does the variedness of our souls.

P.: Bereft of extraneous things, there is no reason for our assuming that one soul is different from another.

H. H.: It is equally so in matter. Bereft of extraneous things, there is no reason for our assuming that one atom of matter is different from another. In fact, you traced all atoms to a primary causal force where there was no variedness.

P.: Yes.

H. H.: My only point is, why don't you consistently and for the same reasons postulate the existence of a primary causal intelligence responsible for the world of infinite souls ?

P.: We may do so.

H. H.: Then, adopting the method of scientists, we may arrive at the conclusion that there is a primary causal force responsible for the universe of matter and also there is a primary causal intelligence responsible for the universe of souls. We must also grant that each of such primary causes has infinite power of expression.

P.: Yes, no doubt so.

H. H.: Our hypothesis will be much more simplified if, instead of assuming two primary causes, we assume only one and characterise it as force endowed with intelligence or as intelligence invested with force.

P.: Certainly.

H. H.: That is exactly what we do in our philosophy. When we conceive of the root cause as force endowed with intelligence, we call it *Sakti* ; when we

conceive of it as intelligence endowed with force we call it *Chit*.

P.: I see.

H. H.: But even in this hypothesis we have the two independent conceptions of force and intelligence subsisting together though in intimate correlation.

P.: It is so.

H. H.: We can still further simplify our hypothesis if we can attribute to that root cause a single characteristic which is common to both force and intelligence and which can take on the form of force or intelligence according as we view it from the standpoint of the universe of matter or from that of the souls. In other words, we may postulate that root cause as undifferentiated intelligence-force (*chit-śakti*). We call that *Brahman*. As intelligence and force are but aspects of the same entity, we can characterise it only by saying that it is ; and we therefore sometimes give it the simple name of *Sat*, Being.

2. THE GREAT FRIEND

P.: But all this is only speculation.

H. H.: It is, if we ignore the stable authority of the Vedas, which enunciate and proclaim such a fact. Apart from this, what does it matter if it is only speculation ? As I have already mentioned, it hurts nobody

P.: But is that any reason for wasting our brains on this matter ?

H. H.: It is far better than wasting our brains on any other matter. Further, there is a great positive benefit also.

P.: What is that ?

H. H.: Suppose a man is too feeble to walk ; does it not gladden his heart to know that he has someone who is strong and willing to support him ? Another man may be very ill ; will it not be some relief to him to know that there is a kind doctor near at hand to attend to him ? Another still may be sorely tried by poverty ; will not his trouble be alleviated by his knowing that there is a rich and kind relation close by who can place him above want ?

P.: Certainly.

H. H.: Every moment of our lives we are face to face with innumerable causes of sorrow, sometimes ill-health, sometimes poverty and so on. Will it not gladden our hearts to know and to feel that there is somebody else close at hand who can relieve us of the causes of our sorrow, and give us comfort, if only we ask for it ?

P.: It is certainly a consoling thought.

H. H.: There is no use in looking up to another sick man when you are sick or to another poor man when you are poor.

P.: Certainly not.

H. H.: We must then think of one who is strong and healthy or who is rich.

P.: Of course.

H. H.: But our difficulties do not end with illness or poverty ?

P.: No. The difficulties to which we are subject are infinite in number.

H. H.: In every one of our difficulties, it will be a relief to know that there exists a friend who is free from that difficulty.

P.: Yes.

H. H.: We must therefore know as many such free persons as the number of difficulties which trouble us.

P.: But that is not possible, as the number of difficulties is infinite.

H. H.: Quite so. It will therefore be a great relief to us if we can find one person who is free from all difficulties ?

P.: Certainly, but where are we to find him ?

H. H.: Death is one of the troubles of this world ?

P.: Certainly.

H. H.: Birth is equally a trouble ?

P.: Undoubtedly ; in fact it is the prime trouble which leads to all other troubles.

H. H.: It will therefore relieve us to know that there is a friend who is not subject to birth or death and can in addition cure us of both these ills.

P.: Logically it is so.

H. H.: Ordinarily we are not content with mere freedom from troubles, for we want our desires to be satisfied; and our desires are equally infinite in number. We would therefore like to have some friend who can fulfil all our wants. Our desires are not only infinite in number, but are also unlimited in extent. No rich relation, howsoever wealthy he may be, can undertake to fulfil all our desires; even if he had the will, his wealth would be exhausted in course of time. It will therefore be well if our hypothetical friend had inexhaustible wealth. One of your friends may be very rich, but he may not have ready cash with him when you want it; in that case he cannot give you instant relief. Our supposed friend must therefore be not only all-rich but he must be so at all times. Further, if your rich friend has to await the arrival of his cashier or has mislaid the key of his safe, he cannot be immediately helpful to you. If you have such a friend at Madura, you cannot have him at Mysore unless you take him there with you. It will certainly be more convenient if your friend could be at any place where you wanted him, without the need for your taking him there. Proceeding on the same line of reasoning, we may say that it would be a great relief to you to feel that there is a friend ever ready to help you, who can be every where with you, who can do anything for you, who knows everything, who is himself free from trouble of any kind whatsoever and who has the desire and the ability to satisfy all your wants and to free you from all your troubles.

P.: But such a friend is a purely hypothetical one?

H. H.: So what ? To feel, rightly or wrongly, that such a friend exists does give us relief. From the nature of the numberless characteristics which we require in such a friend, we must postulate of him omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. With our limited intellect it is difficult for us to conceive of such a friend and impossible to visualise him in actual life. If therefore somebody, who is deeply interested in us and in whom we place full reliance, informs us of the existence of such a friend we shall feel very greatly relieved. In case we happen to doubt the veracity of the statement of our informant, we will not be able to prove it wrong because with our limited intellect we have no means of doing so. But in case we have complete faith in our informant, we become secure in the resultant feeling of the ever-true presence of that all-powerful friend. He who has or who acquires such intense faith can have no fear of despair, believing as he does that that friend being all-knowing and all-powerful will relieve him of all sorrow when the time comes. Even when he does not get any relief, he would console himself with the thought that perhaps in the all-wise dispensation of that friend, this sorrow is itself the best for him under the circumstances. Therefore, apart from the abstract question whether the existence of such a friend, whom we call God, can be proved or demonstrated, there can be no denying the fact that the belief in such a friend is of great practical benefit.

P.: How can we believe in a person of whose existence there is no proof ?

H. H.: Do we believe only in those things whose existence is proved ? If we limit our belief to such

D.G. 9

things it will be impossible to do anything in this world. We have to have faith in the words of every one that comes into contact with us. If a stranger standing by the road directs you, at your request, to a house you are searching for, you do not embark on an enquiry as to his honesty or as to the correctness of his knowledge; but, placing immediate and implicit reliance on him, you go as directed by him. If then you reach the wrong house, it will be time enough to find fault with him. If however before following his directions you want him to prove to you that he is right, the only thing he can do is to take you by the hand and lead you to the house; even then you must be prepared to go with him. It will not do if you refuse to move a single step and yet expect him to prove the correctness of his statement. Similarly, when you have absolutely no reason to doubt the good faith of our ancient seers who proclaim God, you must be prepared to place implicit faith in their words. If you follow their dictates and find at the end that they were wrong, it will be time enough then to blame them, but not till then.

P.: The seers were as much human beings as ourselves. How did they happen to know of God when we do not?

H. H.: They did so because they had implicit faith in the words of their teachers and earnestly followed their instructions for the realisation of God.

P.: If that is the answer, further question will arise as to how did those teachers know? And this question will have to be repeated *ad infinitum* without any finality.

H. H.: Certainly so, if we do not grant the existence of some primal person who knows the truth without the need to learn from another.

P.: Who is he ?

H. H.: Our old friend again, the Omniscient God Himself. The Vedas are His breath and the fountain-head of all right knowledge. Have faith in God, His words and His servants. You will feel before long an immense relief. The thought of His ever-living presence with you will be a great solace to you. Once you begin to feel such a presence, a joy unknown to you ever before will begin to be felt. And you will then realise that time is not something to be merely spent in some pursuit or other, but has to be intensively lived in the pursuit and enjoyment of the bliss of peace. There will no more be any room for pessimistic thoughts nor will life seem a blank with no purpose to serve.

CHAPTER X

THE SANDHYA WORSHIP

1. THE SUN

A touring Educational Officer, Mr. E., once met His Holiness and said, 'I have occasions of being in constant touch with young boys, mostly Brāhmaṇas, studying in schools which I have to inspect. I have found that even the boys who perform their *sandhyā* do so more as a form than as real worship. I shall be very grateful if Your Holiness would give me some valuable hints which I could convey to them'.

H.H.: I am very glad to see that you are not content with mere official routine of inspection but desire to utilise the occasion for the betterment of the boys. It will be well if all educationists, inspecting officers or teachers, realise that they have been entrusted with the very grave responsibility of training up young men in the most impressionable period of their lives. In my opinion they are really to blame if they confine their attention only to the prescribed text books and neglect the spiritual side of the young generation.

E.: I always keep that end before me and I don't miss any opportunity of talking to the boys and giving them some useful advice. It is mainly with a view to do that work better that I request Your Holiness to give me some practical suggestions.

H. H.: Even if the boys to whom you propose to convey such suggestions may not benefit by them, you will certainly be benefited.

E.: Certainly.

H. H.: You may therefore, for the present, ignore the boys and ask such questions the answers to which are likely to be useful to you.

E.: The first question which suggests itself to me is with reference to the *sandhyā* worship. What is the deity or *upāsya devatā* in the *sandhyā* worship?

H. H.: Before we consider that, please tell me what you understand ordinarily by the *sandhyā* worship?

E.: By *sandhyā* worship we mean the worship of the rising Sun, the setting Sun or Sun in the mid heavens.

H. H.: Quite so. Comprehensively speaking, you mean worship of the Sun?

E.: Yes.

H. H.: You tell me that *sandhyā* is the worship of the Sun and yet you ask me what is worshipped in the *sandhyā*. Don't you think it is an unnecessary question?

E.: Put so, it may seem an unnecessary question, but my real question is, what is the Sun that is worshipped?

H. H.: What do you understand ordinarily by the Sun?

E. We mean the bright celestial orb in the sky.

H. H.: Then it is that bright celestial orb that is worshipped.

E.: But that orb is, according to science, mere inert matter in a state of high combustion and is certainly not worthy of being worshipped by intelligent beings like ourselves. It can neither hear our prayers nor respond to them. I cannot believe that our ancestors were so ignorant as to address their prayers to a mere burning mass of matter.

H. H.: I quite agree with you. They could never have been so foolish.

E.: What then did they see in the Sun to justify their prayers being addressed to it?

H. H.: You said just now that addressing of prayers to inert matter cannot be justified by reason.

E.: Yes.

H. H.: What then must be the nature of the entity to which a prayer is addressed?

E.: The primary condition is that it must not be mere inert matter, but must be endowed with intelligence.

H. H.: And the second condition?

E.: That it must be able to hear our prayers and be powerful enough to answer them.

H. H.: Quite so. If our ancients were not fools and yet addressed their prayers to the Sun, their conception of the Sun must have been quite different from

that of mere inert matter in a state of high combustion.

E.: Yes, they must have also postulated of it intelligence, the capacity to hear us and the ability to help us.

H. H.: The 'us' including not only all those who are now living to raise their hands in prayer to the Sun, but also all the generations, past and future, infinite in number though they may be ?

E.: Of course.

H. H.: The entity that is worshipped as the Sun is therefore one whose intelligence or ability knows no limitation of space or time.

E.: It must be so.

H. H.: You have now got your answer to the question as to who is worshipped in the *sandhyā* ? It is an intelligent Being, omniscient and omnipotent in the matter of hearing and responding to its votaries.

2. THE INNER REALITIES

E.: Your Holiness then means that it is a *deva* who has his habitation in the solar orb ?

H. H.: Quite so. He has not only his habitation there but the solar orb itself is his physical body.

E.: Your Holiness means that the *deva* enlivens the solar orb, just as we do our physical bodies ?

H. H.: Just so.

E.: If then he is embodied just like us, how does he happen to have such high intelligence or power as to merit our obeisance ?

H.H.: He attained that status by virtue of the appropriate *karma* and *upāsana* done by him in a previous life.

E.: Does Your Holiness mean that he was at one time just like ourselves and that he attained that status by his endeavour ?

H. H.: Yes.

E.: Then he is no more than a Jīva, which I also am. Why should a Jīva, make prostration before another Jīva, howsoever superior ?

H. H.: Why should your son or pupil respect you and why should you show respect to your superior officers ? Are not both of you Jīvas ?

E.: No doubt we are. But we respect our superiors as it is in their power to help us or injure us, if they so desire.

H. H.: That is a very low kind of respect. Anyhow, taking even that kind of respect, we must respect *Sūrya devatā* if it is in his power to help us or injure us, if he so desires.

E.: Of course.

H. H.: Being a Jīva as much as your superior officers, he will help you if you appeal to him for help or injure you if you ignore or despise him. In your own interest then, you are bound to worship him and secure his good will.

E.: But I need not court the favour nor fear the displeasure of my superior officer, if I carry out the duties of my office faithfully.

H. H.: Quite so.

E.: If I preserve that attitude, there is no reason why I should propitiate my superior officer.

H. H.: Certainly not.

E.: Similarly, if I carry out strictly the duties enjoined on me by the Śāstras, I need not propitiate any other Jīva, be he the highest *deva*.

H. H.: Quite so.

E.: Then, should I not give up the worship of *Sūrya devatā*?

H. H.: Certainly you may, unless of course such a worship is part of the duties enjoined on you by the Śāstras.

E.: How can that be?

H.H.: It is true that an honest and strict officer in performing the duties of his office need not mind the pleasure or the displeasure of his immediate superior. But the mere fact that he thinks it necessary or obligatory to perform those duties properly, shows that he has as the ultimate end the pleasure, or avoidance of the displeasure of a still higher officer who is superior to him as well as to his immediate superior. Even if he has no personal acquaintance with that higher officer, he always has in the background of his mind, an undefined power, call it the King or the Gov-

ernment, when he performs the duties of his office. And that power has the ability to benefit him by a recognition of his services or to punish him by taking note of his delinquencies. Further, that power rules both him and his immediate superior officer. If therefore that power requires him to behave in a particular manner towards his superior officer, he cannot afford to disobey that injunction, for if he disobeys not only does he incur the displeasure of that officer but also of the higher power.

E.: That is so.

H. H.: Similarly if a power which rules both you as well as *Sūrya devatā* requires you to conduct yourself in a particular manner towards that *deva*, you cannot afford to neglect that injunction, but must conform to it or take the risk of incurring the displeasure of that *deva* as also of the higher power.

E. It is no doubt so. But in that case in prostrating myself before *Sūrya devatā*, I shall be really worshipping the higher power even when my worship may seem addressed to the *Sūrya*.

H. H.: What of that?

E.: If I am able to conceive of such a higher power who rules even the *Sūrya*, that power is really the worshipped entity although to all appearances the worship is addressed to the *Sūrya* only.

H. H.: Quite so.

E.: But Your Holiness said that it was *Sūrya devatā* who was worshipped?

H. H.: Yes. It is correct so far as persons who are not able to conceive of a higher power are concerned. To those however who can conceive of that power He is the real *upāśya*. That power is called *Hiraṇyagarbha*. He enlivens and ensouls not only the *Sūrya*, but all devas. He enlivens and inhabits not only the solar orb but all things. He is the cosmic personality who is the soul of all things.

E.: I suppose, just as we have the sense of 'I' in our physical bodies, so does that cosmic personality have the sense of 'I' in the entire cosmos.

H. H.: He has.

E.: If so, the difference between Him and me lies not in the presence or the absence of the sense of 'I' but only in the degree, the range or the magnitude of that sense. Mine is restricted ; His is extended.

H. H.: It is so.

E.: If it is the sense of 'I' that is responsible for the concept of a Jīva, he must be as much a Jīva as myself.

H. H.: Quite so. In fact He is called the First Born.

E.: Then, even if this higher power happens to belong to the category of Jīvas just like myself, the same objection which I mentioned against the worship of *Sūrya devatā* holds good in his case also.

H. H.: What then would you like to worship ?

E.: A transcendent power which is not a Jīva.

H. H.: Have it then that it is such a transcendent power that is worshipped in the *sandhyā*. We give Him the name of *Īśvara*, the Lord, or the *antaryāmi*, the inner ruler.

E.: But I have heard it mentioned that the terms 'Lord' and 'Ruler' are only relative terms which are used in regard to Him when we want to describe Him in relation to the universe, which is 'lorded over' or 'ruled' by Him.

H. H.: Yes, it is so.

E.: It cannot be that we can have no conception of Him apart from his relationship of some sort to the universe. His relationship to the universe can at best be only an extraneous circumstance. In His essence, He must have an independent existence quite unrelated to any thing else.

H. H.: You are right. We call that unrelated essential existence Brahman.

E.: If it is so, that must be the real object of worship rather than the relative aspect called *Īśvara*.

H. H.: It is even as you say. It is really the unqualified Brahman that is worshipped in the *Sandhyā*.

3. THE RECONCILIATION

E.: I cannot really understand Your Holiness. You first said that it was the solar orb that was the object of worship; but when I pointed out that it was only inert matter, you said that it was *Sūrya*

devatā that was the object of worship; when again I pointed out that he was only a limited Jiva like myself, you said it was *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the cosmic soul, that was the object of worship; when once again I pointed out that he was after all a Jiva however cosmic his sense of 'I' may be, you said that *Īśvara* the Lord and Ruler of the universe was really the object of worship; and lastly when I said that even he is but a relative aspect of Brahman, you said that the object of worship was Brahman itself.

H. H.: I did say so.

E.: But I fail to see how all these statements can be reconciled.

H. H.: Where is the difficulty?

E.: The object in a particular worship can be only one. How can it be the solar orb or the *deva* enlivening it or *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Īśvara* or Brahman at the same time?

H. H.: I never said that it was the solar orb or the *deva* and so on.

E.: Does Your Holiness mean to say then that the object of worship is the solar orb and the *deva* and *Hiraṇyagarbha* and *Īśvara* and Brahman all put together?

H. H.: Nor did I say anything of that sort.

E.: How then am I to understand Your Holiness' statements?

H.H.: When did I tell you that the *upāsya* was *Sūrya*?

E.: When I mentioned that the physical mass of burning matter cannot be the object of worship.

H. H.: Before you mentioned it, I said that it was even that mass that was the *upāsya*.

E.: Yes

H. H.: I never mentioned that it was the solar body or the *deva* as an alternative. To one who cannot conceive of an enlivening soul, the *upāsya* is the physical mass; to one, however, who declines to accept inert matter as an object of worship, I said the *upāsya* was *Sūrya devatā*. The *upāsya* is ever one but its exact nature varies with the competence of the worshipping aspirant. The *upāsya* gets further refined when even the concept of a *deva* does not satisfy the enquiring devotee. We say then that it is *Hiranyagarbha*. When even such a concept seems meagre or unsatisfactory, we tell the devotee that he is really worshipping the Supreme Lord himself. When he begins to feel that even the Lord-ness is a limitation of His essential nature, we tell him that it is the infinite Brahman itself that is really worshipped. Where is the difficulty?

E.: Does Your Holiness then mean that it is not possible to definitely say what the object of worship in the *sandhyā* is, except with reference to the mental equipment or intellectual advancement of the worshipper?

H. H.: How can there be an object of worship if we ignore the worshipper? The nature of the worshipped necessarily depends upon the nature of the worshipper.

E.: How ?

H. H.: Take me for example. All of you show me respect. But the object of respect, though it is, roughly speaking, myself, does differ with each one of you. Ordinary people respect me and like to see me surrounded by a glittering paraphernalia; their attention and respect are claimed by those articles rather than by my personality. Such people will show the same respect to others who have similar paraphernalia. Their homage is not therefore really paid to me but only to the paraphernalia. Some others respect me for the position that I hold or for the *Āśrama* in which I am. Such people will equally respect others who are or may come to be in such a position or in such an *Āśrama*; their homage is therefore not paid to me but to my position or to the *Āśrama*. And some others may not care what position I hold or in what *Āśrama* I am, but give me homage wherever I go and however I may be; their object of respect is my physical body. A few others will not mind if my body is dark or ugly or even diseased, but will nevertheless give me homage if by purity of mind and character or by the power of my intellect and learning or by any spiritual merit that I may possess I command their respect. Very few indeed will respect me for the spark of divine intelligence which inheres in me, as it does in all of you.

E.: Of course it is not possible to say that all the devotees that approach Your Holiness are of the same mental equipment.

H. H.: Quite so. But ordinarily all these people, whether they really tender homage to the para-

phernalia or to my status and *Āśrama* or to my body or to my mind or to my intellect or to the divine spark in me, prostrate before me to show their respect. Can you tell me, apart from any reference to the several devotees, to whom or to what they prostrate?

E.: It is no doubt very difficult to answer.

H. H.: Similarly with every kind of worship. Externally viewed, there will be no appreciable difference between the one who respects me for the paraphernalia and another who respects me for the divine spark in me. Externally viewed, there will similarly be no appreciable difference between the devotee who in his blind faith is content to address his prayers to the luminous Sun and another who turns to it as a visible symbol of the infinite Brahman. The question as to what is the *upāsya* in the *sandhyā* worship can therefore be answered only in this way.

E.: I now understand how in the simple worship of the Sun all possible stages in spiritual perception have been provided for.

H. H.: It is not only this, for you will find, if you consider the matter still further, that all the three ways known as *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* have been given places in the daily worship, but that is a different matter. Simple as the *sandhyā* worship seems to be, it is sufficient to help us on to the highest stages. It is as useful to the highest aspirant as it is to the beginner. It is a folly, therefore, to belittle its value or to neglect it in practice.

CHAPTER XI

TRUE DEVOTION

1. THE SCOPE OF BHAJANA

Another evening the conversation which was quite general at first gradually turned on to the subject of *bhajana*, singing of devotional songs to the accompaniment of music. A *bhakta* who belonged to the party in attendance mentioned that such devotional exercises had an exhilarating and soothing effect on our wayward minds and that it was pleasing to find that *bhajana* parties were being formed in increasing numbers in every town and village.

H. H.: I am glad to hear this. But I have heard that at the same time the observance of our religious rites is steadily going down. Why is it so?

B.: It is mainly because the ordinary people lack faith in the efficacy of religious rites that they resort to *bhajana* for pleasing God.

H.H.: I suppose that many of the persons engaged in *bhajana* may not care for or may even neglect their ordinary religious duties like the *sandhyā* worship.

B.: Yes. They say that while engaged in *bhajana* they can give up the *sandhyā* worship, because *bhajana* being a higher kind of worship makes *sandhyā* unnecessary and redundant.

H. H.: As a general proposition it is quite true that the greater includes the less. But how do we know that *bhajana* is of greater efficacy than *karma* in the matter of pleasing God ?

B.: *Bhajana* is a direct appeal to God while *karma* is but an indirect appeal through the observance of rituals.

H. H.: I suppose you concede that we have never met God personally.

B.: Certainly, I do.

H. H.: You must also concede that we can never of our own accord find out what will please God and what will not, for we cannot ask him directly nor can He tell us in person.

B.: It may be so, but we can easily ascertain it from the Śruti, which embodies His teachings.

H. H.: You may also add the Smritis, especially the Bhagavad Gītā, which record in no unmistakable terms His mind as divulged to those who have had the rare fortune to hold direct communion with Him, both in the spirit and in the flesh.

B.: Certainly.

H. H.: And what do they teach us ?

B.: They certainly do not discount *bhakti*.

H. H.: Certainly not. But the question is, what is *bhakti* ? Is it your *bhajana* or is it *karma* ?

B.: How can *karma* be *bhakti* ?

H. H.: In fact, you will find that *karma* alone can be *bhakti* and certainly not the *bhajana*, if it is inconsistent with or is divorced from *karma*.

B.: How can that be ?

H. H.: The Lord tells us quite unambiguously 'Man attains perfection by worshipping God by performing the *karma* enjoined for him'. He clearly enunciates here the proposition that the way to worship Him is to perform one's assigned *karma*.

B.: But such a performance of *karma* is not the only way in which devotion can be shown to the Lord.

H. H.: It is the only way for those on whom *karma* is enjoined.

B.: Surely a person who spends his time in prayer and contemplation of the Lord is as much a *bhakta* as, if not more, the one who busies himself with outward rituals.

H. H.: Leave again comparing. He will not be a *bhakta* at all if he chooses to neglect the *karma* enjoined on him in favour of mental prayers and contemplation.

B.: Why so ?

H. H.: Take the ordinary case of a master and his servants. Suppose one of his servants is always standing before him and singing his praises. The master may sometimes ask him to fetch something from another room. Suppose the servant replies, 'O, Master, I cannot bear the thought of parting from you even for a moment. I cannot forego even for a moment the pleasure and the privilege of looking at

your handsome face. I like to be ever with you and to praise you by recounting your inestimable qualities. Don't ask me to leave your presence.' Suppose again there is another servant who is always away from the presence of the master, but is carrying out with scrupulous care all the commands of the master, communicated to him either by the master personally or through his deputies. Wherever the master turns, he finds that he has been most loyally obeyed by this servant who nowhere seems to intrude on him. Which do you think is the more devoted of these two servants and with whom in your opinion, will the master be pleased more ?

B.: Certainly the latter.

H. H.: Is a father happy with the child who always prefers to sit on his lap and declines to do anything or with the one who is going out on errands ?

B.: With the latter, I should think.

H. H.: Further, can you grant that the servant or the boy, who refuses to leave the presence of his master or father and does not carry out his orders, is really devoted at all ?

B.: Surely disobedience cannot go hand in hand with devotion.

H. H.: Quite so. The primary test of devotion in any sphere of life is obedience, unquestioning and loving obedience, not inquisitive or grumbling obedience.

B.: Certainly.

H. H.: The Śruti and the Smṛiti are the commands of Myself,' says the Lord. Can you conceive of a devotion to the Lord side by side with a disobedience of His commands ?

B.: I now see that *bhajana* can never be a substitute for *karma*.

H. H.: It can never be.

B.: What then is the function of *bhajana* ? It cannot certainly be all waste.

H. H.: A servant, when he finds leisure after discharging all his duties, may certainly stand in the presence of the master, but not when he has got duties to perform. Similarly a person, who after performing all the *karma* enjoined on him still finds leisure, can spend it in prayer or in singing the praises of the Lord and thus utilise the leisure to the best advantage. *Bhajana* is thus intended only for the occasions of leisure in the midst of *karmic* duties.

B.: I fear if a Brāhmaṇa should be asked to perform properly all the duties enjoined on him by the Vedas and the Smṛitis and then have *bhajana* at leisure, he may not have time for *bhajana* at all.

H. H.: It is not quite so. It is only the lazy people that are ever short of time. The busy ones are always able to find leisure.

B.: It seems to me that if *bhajana* is to be done only at the times not occupied by religious duties, the castes other than the Brāhmaṇas will have more leisure for it, as they have to perform only very few religious

observances. It seems that the non-Brāhmaṇas are more competent to take up *bhajana*.

H. H.: Quite so. It is intended more for them than for the Brāhmaṇas.

B.: Is it not an anomaly that the Brāhmaṇas should be denied equal privilege in this matter?

H. H.: No. They are not denied this 'privilege' as you call it, for they can enjoy it in their leisure moments. Further, you forget that carrying out the commands of the Lord is a greater act of devotion than singing His praises. Now you may look at the matter from another point of view also.

B.: What is that?

H. H.: A servant who loves to look at the face of his master and avoids performance of his duties does so because he derives pleasure from being with the master and fears a cessation of that pleasure if he has to perform his duties.

B.: It may seem to be so.

H. H.: The only consideration therefore which weighs with him in determining his conduct is his own pleasure and not the pleasure of his master.

B.: Strictly analysed, it is so.

H. H.: Can you call such a servant devoted in any sense when he places his own selfish pleasure above his master's pleasure?

B.: Certainly not.

H. H.: Similarly, if a so-called *bhakta* prefers to sing to the accompaniment of enchanting music the praises of the Lord, at the same time ignoring, neglecting and disregarding His divine commands, can you call him a 'devotee' at all ?

B.: I fear, not.

H. H.: Again please consider for a moment that that so-called *bhakta* has a conception of the Lord only as a very attractive object intended for his enjoyment. What can be more absurd than dragging down the All-conscious, Omnipotent Lord to the level of a toy intended for one's amusements ? To conceive of the Lord as an object of pleasure is sheer profanation, which should never pass off under the name of devotion. Real devotion lies in carrying out His dictates implicitly. To disobey Him in action and to profess allegiance in words is blasphemy. It is not *bhakti*. By *bhakti* is meant single-pointed devotion uniformly expressed in mind, speech and body.

2. NAME AND FORM

B.: May I ask one other question which suggests itself to me in relation to *bhakti* ?

H. H.: Yes. What is it ?

B.: I have seen a number of *bhaktas* who lead earnest and pious lives, but at the same time indulge in recrimination and invective if any *devatā* other than their own *upāsya deva* happens to be praised within their hearing. Is such an attitude of intolerance consistent with true *bhakti* ?

H. H.: No. It is not. Such an attitude is to be found not in true *bhaktas* but only in those who have no proper understanding of the meaning of *bhakti* or of the nature of the Lord to whom they profess to be devoted. The Highest Being, the Supreme Lord, the ruler of the universe, transcends all particular names and forms. Name and form are the attributes of the mute *prakriti*. God has no name or form of His own until you clothe Him, howsoever slightly, in *prakriti*. This entire world of name and form is, as it were, only His feet, to adopt the words of the *Purusha Sūkta*. We cannot have any direct relationship with the higher and larger portion of His divine personality. Only His feet are visible to us and we are asked to worship Him only through service to His feet. It is our proper conduct, as laid down in the *Śāstras*, with reference to the various portions of the universe (*devas*, *pitris*, men, animals, etc.), that goes by the name of *karma*. This is the service of the feet. When, after steady and continued service at His feet, the Lord, satisfied with our devotion, chooses to raise us up to a height wherefrom we can look directly upon His face, there will be time enough to learn whether His forehead bears the mark of the *gopichandana* or is adorned with *bhasma*. Situated as we are at present at the lowest rung of the ladder and even without a gleam of the glory of His feet, why should we choose to waste our time and energy in speculating and wrangling about the nature of His face? The true *bhakta* never does that. He is content to know the simple definition of the Lord that He is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Dissolver of the universe. The name or form that you assign to the Lord is of no moment to Him, for He knows that that name or form is not His essence, but is accepted or

assumed only temporarily for the sake of a particular *bhakta*. The true *bhakta* is also content to know that the *Vedas* are His divine commands and that a strict performance of the duties enjoined by them is the only way of securing the grace of the Lord and, within the competence of man, the only way of serving Him.

B.: But is it not a fact that a *Śiva bhakta* claims that *Śiva* is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Dissolver of the universe, and a *Vishnu bhakta* claims the same thing for *Vishnu*?

H. H.: No doubt at first sight it may seem to be so. In the view of the *Śiva bhakta*, his Lord *Śiva* is the only Creator, Sustainer and Dissolver of the universe; he does not grant that any other entity, *Vishnu* or another, has the characteristics of being the Creator, Sustainer and Dissolver of the universe. He does not say that there are more than one entities which can claim those characteristics or that his Lord *Śiva* is supreme over all others. What he means and what he does believe is that the Lord *Śiva* is the only Creator, Sustainer and Dissolver of the universe. He does not postulate plurality of Gods, but emphatically says that there is but one God who is the Creator, Sustainer and Dissolver of the universe and that His name is *Śiva*.

B.: Certainly it is so. But the *Vishnu bhakta* says the same thing of *Vishnu*. The devotee of *Ganeśa*, *Subrahmanya* or *Devi* also says the same thing of his *upāsya*. Which of these has to be taken as right? All of them surely cannot be right.

H. H.: You agree with me that none of these *bhaktas* postulate plurality of Gods?

B.: I do.

H. H.: You agree with me that they all postulate the existence of only one God ?

B.: Certainly.

H. H.: You also note that they all agree in the definition of that God as the Creator, the Sustainer and the Dissolver of the Universe ?

B.: Yes.

H. H.: But they happen to differ as regards the name or the form to be attributed to that God ?

B.: Quite so.

H. H.: This shows that their conception of God is not at all faulty.

B.: Yes.

H. H.: Suppose you have a grain of rice before you and you satisfy yourself that it has got all the characteristics which are peculiar to rice and that therefore it is rice ; does it matter the least to you if a Tamilian gives it the name of *ariṣi*, a Canarese calls it *akki* or a Sanskrit Pandit prefers to call it *tanḍula* ?

B.: No, it does not matter.

H. H.: Don't you then realise that all names are external to and not of the essence of things, though such names have great practical utility in the world of names and forms ? Similarly, if the characteristics of being the Creator, Sustainer and Dissolver of the universe are there, what does it matter if He is called *Śiva*, *Vishnu* or *Devī* ? The entity denoted is

the same though the names may differ. A Tamilian who does not know Canarese or Sanskrit will be vehement in saying that rice is called only as *ariśi* and never as *akki* or *taṇḍula*. He is quite correct so far as he goes, for no such names are to be found in the Tamil language with which alone he is familiar. As long as, by a process of analysis, he does not learn to dissociate the name from the thing, the name is the thing for him; and if you deny that name, he will take it that you deny the thing itself. Only that *bhakta* will be quarrelsome who cannot dissociate a particular name or a particular form from his conception of God. He is correct so far as his mentality goes. But his *bhakti* is far below that real *bhakti* which realises that God is above all names and above all forms, that particular names are but convenient denominations for trying to express the essentially inexpressible and that particular forms are only limited aspects of the essentially limitless God.

3. THE PURĀṆAS EXPLAINED

B.: It seems to me that Śrī Vyāsa is himself responsible for these unseemly squabbles. He wrote a large number of Purāṇas devoted to many different *devatās*; and in every one of them he calls the *devatā* dealt with there as the Highest Being, so that even a sincere reader is unable to understand which is really the Highest Being in Śrī Vyāsa's view.

H. H.: I suppose we can start with the presumption that Śrī Vyasa was neither an ignorant person nor was he deliberately out to mislead people?

B.: Certainly.

H. H.: He must have known the elementary proposition that there cannot possibly be more than one Highest Being.

B.: Quite so. That is just my difficulty. I cannot understand how he chooses to call every one of the *devatās* as the Highest Being.

H. H.: Your difficulty is very easily solved if you understand Śrī Vyāsa to say not that every *devatā* is a highest Being but that the Highest Being is every one of the *devatās*.

B.: How is that ?

H. H.: The Highest Being having no name or form of His own has to take on some name or form when He is conceived of as an object of worship. Being in His essential nature absolutely formless, in the absolute view He has no form at all ; but in the relative view, all forms are equally His.

B.: I do understand this. But Śrī Vyāsa when he deals with a particular form, say *Śiva*, chooses to endow it not only with the attributes of the Highest Being but also with the attributes peculiar to other *devatās*. He does not deal with *Śiva* as the Dissolver-aspect of the highest Being, but says that He is even *Vishnu* or *Brahmā* and sometimes says that *Vishnu* and *Brahmā* are but His aspects or offspring.

H. H.: Take a familiar incident in family life. Suppose a gentleman has four children and the birthday of one of them happens to be celebrated. That child is the 'idol', the *upāsya* for the day. He is seated on a raised seat in the central hall of the house ; he

is dressed in costly clothes and is decked with jewels. Is it not usual for the mother and the other children to part temporarily with the jewels that they themselves usually wear, so that the 'idol' of the day may be better adorned ?

B.: It is so.

H. H.: Do the mother and the other children feel the slightest regret at parting with their jewels or the slightest envy at that child wearing them for the occasion ?

B.: Certainly not.

H. H.: Do not the other children know very well that when their turn of birthday celebrations comes, they will be similarly decked out in finery and jewels including those which that child ordinarily wears ?

B.: Certainly they do.

H. H.: Can anybody accuse that child of depriving its mother and the other children of their jewels on this day ? Further, will anybody accuse the father of partiality towards that child because he gives it prominence for the day and even deprives the others of their jewels to enable that child to shine better ?

B.: Certainly not.

H. H.: Now will you tell me in whom the right of ownership and possession of all this finery and all the jewels really vests ?

B.: Certainly in the father.

H. H.: Quite so. Does he ever wear the jewels himself ?

B.: No.

H. H.: That means, that though all the jewels really belong to him, he never shows himself off in them but finds pleasure in decking out his children in them as and when occasions may arise?

B.: Quite so.

H. H.: We may therefore say of him that he never wears any jewels though all the jewels are really his?

B.: Yes.

H. H.: The jewels are his, not only when they are kept in the safe in his custody but even when the child is actually wearing them.

B.: Certainly.

H. H.: The Highest Being, the impersonal Brahman, is like the father. He never wears any attributes but all the attributes, which every one of the *devatās* has, belong to Him. When a particular *devatā* is conceived of as the *upāsya* in a particular Purāṇa for the upliftment of a type of *bhakta*, that *devatā* is given the seat of honour, next to none (not even the father, who has to stand aside in the background looking on happily at the child), and has to be decked with all the attributes which ordinarily go with the other *devatās* also. There is absolutely no room for any charge of partiality if in any particular Purāṇa certain *devatā* is given prominence over others, for when their turn comes in the other Purāṇas they are treated with equal prominence. Such is the attitude of Śrī Vyāsa in every one of his Purāṇas. He knows that the Highest Being is devoid of any attri-

butes, any name or any form ; but, as a practical teacher, he knows equally well that such an absolute conception is not within the reach of people, a few exceptions apart, and, therefore, he offers for the contemplation of devotees particular *devatās* who, though mere aspects of the Absolute Brahman, are treated for the moment and for all practical purposes as being identical with the Supreme Being. He has so written the Purāṇas that the *bhakta* of any particular *devatā* by intensity of devotional exercise can obtain the fruits of devotion to other *devatās* also, without the need of worshipping them separately, and finally, by further effort, can attain even a knowledge of the Absolute Brahman, through devotion to his particular *devatā*. For practical wisdom, which combines economy of effort with maximum benefit and adapts the doctrine of the Absolute Brahman to the needs of the devotee without impairing in any way the truth of the doctrine, Śrī Vyāsa is inimitable. If we fight among ourselves without understanding Śrī Vyāsa properly, the fault is ours, certainly not his. On the other hand, all our gratitude must go to him.

CHAPTER XII

ADVAITA

1. A MATTER FOR REALISATION

An elderly gentleman, Mr. R., who had some acquaintance with the Vedānta literature once approached His Holiness and said :

R.: I have tried to understand the Advaita philosophy but numerous doubts and difficulties keep on cropping up now and then, which I don't find it possible to solve by myself or with the help of the scholars whom I have met. I shall be very grateful if Your Holiness will be pleased to initiate me into the Advaita Vedānta yourself.

H. H.: I shall certainly be very glad to do so, if I can do it. But it is quite beyond my competence.

R.: I am sure Your Holiness is not serious. If Your Holiness professes incompetence to teach Advaita, I do not see how anybody else in the world can claim to teach it.

H. H.: What can we do ? It is the nature of the subject. The Upanishad itself proclaims 'He who claims to know, knows not'. The Advaita is not something to be learnt ; therefore it can not be a thing to be taught. It is essentially something to be realised by oneself. I cannot therefore undertake to teach you. If, however, in the course of your Vedāntic

studies, you want any passage to be explained either in a text or in a commentary, I shall certainly try my best to explain it. I can thus help you only to understand the significance of words or of sentences which are composed of words, or of ideas which are conveyed by sentences. But it is impossible to convey to you a correct idea of what Advaita is, for it is neither a matter for words nor is it a mental concept. It is, on the other hand, pure experience which transcends all these. Suppose I do not know what sweetness is. Can you describe sweetness in words sufficiently expressive to convey an idea of sweetness to me?

R.: That is certainly impossible.

H. H.: Sweetness can be known only when I put some sweet thing on my tongue. It is impossible of being explained in words or of being learnt from another person. It has to be realised in direct experience. If a thing so familiar to us as sweetness transcends all expression, how much more transcendental will be the truth of Advaita, which is the supreme sweetness. I am reminded in this connection of a gentleman who came here some time back. He was a Brāhmaṇa but his training had all been on the 'modern' lines so that he was a Brāhmaṇa only in name; and thanks to circumstances, he had attained a prominent position in public life. It was his first visit to this place. He seemed to have been very much enchanted with the crystal water of the river, the natural scenery all round, the peaceful atmosphere and other things. When he came to me, he expressed the delight he experienced and added 'Why, it is *brahmānanda*!' He evidently meant, of course, that it was like *brahmā-*

nanda, the bliss of Brahman, the Absolute. It struck me that, in spite of his training and habits so divorced from our time-honoured religion, this idea that *brahmānanda* was the highest of all *ānandas* and that, therefore, that alone could be used as a simile to express a delight which defies adequate expression was still uneradicated from his mind. I mention this incident to show that, even in common parlance when we find words wanting to express an intense sensuous pleasure, we resort to *brahmānanda* alone as an adequate or expressive simile. That means that it is universally recognised that the *ānanda* of Brahman which is the same as Advaita is beyond all words. Ask me not therefore to teach you Advaita, for it is an impossibility. But you may ask me to unravel for you some grammatical construction or to solve some of your doubts in the logic of the system. That is the best that I can do for you.

R.: I now quite understand the standpoint of Your Holiness. But I do not think I shall be justified in troubling Your Holiness to solve doubts in grammar, syntax or logic.

H. H.: It does not matter in the least. If the solving of even such a doubt takes us nearer to a realisation of Advaita, it is worth doing.

R.: But I have not brought any book with me now and I am unable to state from memory any of the passages which I found difficult to understand.

H. H.: We shall reserve it then for some other occasion. We may now consider some topic for which no reference to books is needed.

R.: As Your Holiness pleases.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME

H. H.: First, we shall try to understand what is meant by Advaita. How have you understood it?

R.: I have heard it explained thus: *dvi* means two, *dvitā* means the state of being two, that is, twoness. *Dvaitam* is the same as *dvitā*. Advaita is therefore that thing in which there is no twoness or duality.

H. H.: Quite so. What do you call that something in which there is no twoness?

R.: It is Brahman.

H. H.: Perfectly right. And by Brahman you mean that basic principle of reality wherefrom the universe derives its existence, whereon it rests and wherein it disappears?

R.: Yes.

H. H.: Let us ignore the word Brahman and its full significance for a moment. You give the name of Advaita to the principle which is responsible for the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe?

R.: Quite so.

H. H.: You mean then that there is no twoness in the principle?

R.: Yes.

H. H.: In other words, you mean that that principle is one and one only?

R.: Certainly.

H. H.: To explain it again, you mean that there are no two such principles ?

R: Yes.

H. H.: And you claim that our system of thought is rightly called Advaita as it enunciates the doctrine of the non-existence of two such principles ?

R.: Quite so.

H. H.: That is alright. Now we shall consider for a moment the other systems of thought, be it Christianity or Mahomedanism, Viśishtādvaita or Dvaita, Tarka or Yoga, be it any system of thought which admits the existence of a principle which is responsible for the creation, the sustenance and the dissolution of the universe. Do any of these systems ever proclaim that there are two such principles or do they all agree in proclaiming that there is and can be only one such principle ?

R.: No system postulates any plurality in God. There may be and is plurality among the *devas*, who are as much created beings as ourselves, but certainly none in the Supreme Godhead. He is ever One.

H. H.: Quite so. No system therefore enunciates any duality so far as God is concerned ?

R.: It is so.

H. H.: Then, every system, inasmuch as it negates the existence of two Gods is entitled to give the name of Advaita to the God enunciated by it and to appropriate the same name for itself also. If so, what is the justification for your monopolising the name

Advaita specially to your God and to your particular system of thought ?

R.: I pray that Your Holiness may be pleased to explain it.

H. H.: There is another difficulty. You know that in the Advaita philosophy a practical *saguṇa* Brahman and a transcendent *nirguṇa* Brahman are both enunciated.

R. Yes.

H. H.: None of the other systems accepts similar distinction and they decline to conceive of Brahman as twofold ?

R. Yes.

H. H.: It would seem therefore that all other systems, except your own, enunciate a single supreme principle and that in your system only there is an enunciation of two supreme principles, the *saguṇā* and the *nirguṇā*. Strictly speaking, therefore, it would seem that all systems are equally entitled to call themselves Advaita and that, if any system can be disqualified from using that name by reason of enunciating plurality in God, it is certainly your system only that can be so disqualified. The Advaita system is thus not only not exclusively entitled to call itself Advaita, but is not entitled at all to call itself by that name. How do you then call it Advaita ?

R.: The answer for this also must come only from Your Holiness.

H. H.: Not necessarily, for you yourself can give the answer quite easily.

R.: How ?

3. DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

H. H.: Generally speaking, a name gets attached to a particular thing only if some attribute which is denoted by that name happens to be the exclusive attribute of that thing. If an attribute is common between a particular thing and several others, that particular thing can not be called by the name which connotes that attribute.

R.: Certainly.

H. H.: A name is therefore given to a particular thing when that thing has an exclusive characteristic of its own which is associated with that name.

R.: Quite so.

H. H.: Now, what is the exclusive characteristic of our system of philosophy which is absent in all other systems ?

R.: I suppose, the doctrine of *Māyā*.

H. H.: Quite so ; and its implications.

R.: What are the implications ?

H. H.: Before we go to that question, tell me what do you understand by *Māyā*.

R.: I have heard it explained as the differentiating principle which is responsible for diversity in the universe.

H. H.: In the universe of matter or in the universe of souls ?

R.: In both. *Māyā* is the prime cause of all diversity, in the objective as well as the subjective universe.

H. H.: Then, but for *Māyā*, there can be no diversity at all ?

R.: I have heard it so said.

H. H.: Matter, inert as it is, will have no independent existence of its own, but for *Māyā* ?

R.: No.

H. H.: Similarly, I suppose, we, individuals as we are now, will have no independent existence of our own, but for *Māyā* ?

R.: It would seem so.

H. H.: If we do not enunciate any such differentiating principle as *Māyā*, matter, inert matter, will persist in having an existence of its own consistently with God the Supreme Principle, just as the mud from which a pot is made claims consistent existence with the potter who uses it for making the pot.

R.: It is so. In some other systems, they assign to God only the status of the potter and enunciate a primary substance, be it *pradhāna* or the atoms or any other thing, as the material out of which the universe is made.

H. H.: But there are some systems which deny the independent existence of matter and which enun-

ciate that God is Himself the material cause as well as the efficient cause. That is, He is as much the mud as the potter.

R.: Quite so. I think such an idea is formulated by the Viśishtādvaitins.

H. H.: It finds a place in some other systems also. Though they conceive of God as the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe, they do not grant that God is the material cause of individual souls, for souls are not matter; nor is God the efficient cause of such souls, for souls are not 'made'.

R.: I understand.

H. H.: Then, by postulating that the individual souls are not made but exist from time beginningless, they assign to them an existence, an independent existence, co-eval with God Himself.

R.: No doubt so, for they call all souls eternal.

H. H.: But so do we. The difference between our system and theirs lies not in ascribing eternal existence to the individual soul, but in their ascribing to it eternal independent existence as an individual soul and in our ascribing the eternality to Brahman and denying to the soul any existence independent of Brahman.

R.: It is so.

H. H.: Now then, we find that there are some systems which postulate the existence of God as the Supreme Being and at the same time grant the independent existence of matter and also the independent existence of individual souls. In some other sys-

tems, God is conceived of as the Supreme Being as well as the primary material cause of the universe of matter, thereby denying to inert matter an independent existence of its own, but conceding such an existence to individual souls.

R.: Yes.

H. H.: It is only in the Advaita system that matter is denied existence independent of God and the individual soul also is denied existence independent of God.

R.: Quite so.

H. H.: It will be clear now that the distinguishing characteristic, which exclusively belongs to the Advaita system, is its enunciation of the non-existence of the universe of matter or of individual souls independent of God which is called by us Brahman.

R.: No doubt, it is so.

H. H.: It must be then this distinguishing characteristic which is responsible for the name Advaita, which our system has appropriated to itself and by which it is generally known to all.

R.: But how does the name Advaita convey the idea of this distinctive characteristic?

H. H.: You yourself said that Advaita signified a negation of duality.

R.: But Your Holiness pointed out that no religion in the world postulated a duality in God?

H. H.: Quite so. You committed the mistake of understanding 'negation of twoness in God' to mean

'negation of two Gods', thereby giving room for my further questions. If Advaita meant negation of two Gods, our system has no sole right at all to appropriate that name to itself; but, if it means on the other hand negation of any second principle independent of God, we have the sole right to monopolise that name for our system. It is only in the latter sense that our system goes by the name of Advaita.

R.: I now understand the significance of the name; but there is *Māyā* the differentiating principle which is responsible for the diversity in the universe of matter and of individual souls. Surely, that is a second principle.

H. H.: No. That cannot be a second principle. Viewing it as the *śakti* or power or potentiality of Brahman, it can have no independent existence of its own apart from the *śakta*, the Supreme Person or Brahman. From the still higher standpoint of absolute truth, it has no existence at all. *Māyā* is the name given to it because it is not (*yā mā*), but *seems* to be, borrowing its seeming reality from the eternal verity called Brahman.

4. OUR IMMEDIATE DUTY

R.: The doctrine of *Māyā* is a bugbear to many of the modern scholars and they even go to the length of saying that it is really a weak point in the otherwise sound system of Advaita.

H. H.: It will be well if it proves so much of a bugbear that the 'modern' scholars leave Advaita alone. The Advaita doctrine is enunciated from a

plane which ordinary people cannot aspire to for very many more births to come. They have absolutely no right to approach it, much less to sit in judgment over it. As at present situated, most of us are far, far below that stage. Frankly speaking, it may take innumerable births for some of us (who do not think of the soul at all) to attain even the stage of the *Chārvaṅka* or materialist, who thinks that the soul is no other than our physical body itself.

R.: I hope we are not so low down as that. The days of rank materialism are past and I am sure we can claim to be *āstikas* or believers.

H. H.: I am not so sure about that. If you consider for a moment the significance of the word *āstika*, I feel sure you will yourself hesitate before you claim to be one. An *āstika* is one who says a thing is (*Asti*) and a *nāstika* is one who says a thing is *not* (*Nāsti*). Suppose there is a vessel before me. Can a person say that it is and another person at the same time say it is *not*?

R.: Certainly not. If the vessel is, it is for both.

H. H.: Quite so. Suppose a man says that the Himālaya mountain is, can another man who has never seen it say that it is not?

R.: No. He can only say that he has never seen it. He cannot deny its existence.

H. H.: That is, in your view, if a person says that a thing exists and if the existence of the thing is patent to all or is verifiable by everybody, no other person can possibly say that it does not exist.

R.: Quite so.

H. H.: Therefore an honest difference of opinion as regards the existence for a thing can possibly arise only if that thing is not manifestly perceived or is incapable of being verified immediately.

R.: Quite so.

H. H.: That there is a future birth is a fact not evident to all and not capable of being verified now. That there are regions of experience other than this earth is also a fact neither patent nor capable of immediate verification. Similarly, the existence of God is not patent to all, nor can it be verified by our limited capacity of perception.

R.: No doubt so.

H. H.: When we call a person an *āstika*, we do not merely mean that he says that any particular thing is; nor, when we call a person a *nāstika*, do we merely mean that he says that particular thing is *not*. We use the term *āstika* for one who asserts these three things: the existence of a future birth, the existence of other *lokas* of experience, and the existence of God. Similarly, we use the term *nāstika*, for one who denies the existence of these three. Now, consider for a moment the attitude of the modern man, however educated he may claim to be. Does his daily conduct bear out that he believes in a future birth, a future *loka*, or even in God? Why does the craze for pleasure increase day by day as if all enjoyment must be had now or never? How is the belief in a future state of experience consistent with the growing neglect of Dharma? What justification is there for the increase

in the number of Law Courts and Registration Offices if the people believe in God, the Eternal Witness of all their transactions? Whatever people may choose to say in public and whatever they may think of themselves, I am convinced that *āstikyam*, faith, is going down rapidly. All our present endeavours must be directed towards a restoration and maintenance of *āstikyam*.

Questions posing as to whether the Ultimate Reality is one, two or one-and-a-half, have no practical interest for the large majority of us. We may therefore leave such questions for the present and interest ourselves in the practice of our Dharma. Everybody knows that it is wrong to tell a lie. Nobody has the slightest doubt about it. All the same, falsehood is ever on the increase. Everybody knows that it is wrong to cheat. All the same, cheating is the normal practice in modern life. What is the practical use of enunciating the abstract truth of the Absolute Brahman to people who are not prepared to put into practice the elementary principles of even Sāmānya Dharma, Ordinary Law. After securing steadiness in Sāmānya Dharma, and after purifying and qualifying himself by the earnest practice of Viśeṣha Dharma, the Special Law, prescribed for him, a person attains the requisite standard of competence to enable him to enter on the study of Advaita. The tendency to neglect the wholesome doctrine that Vedantic study is intended only for the competent is responsible for the confused thinking of modern days. Even for simple crafts, such as masonry or carpentry a preliminary course of training is required before a person is allowed to handle the instruments; but in the field of Brahma-Vidyā, the

science of the Self, the highest and the most difficult of all sciences, everybody thinks himself competent and entitled to study the system of Advaita and even to sit in judgment over it. This attitude must go and must be replaced by earnest endeavour first to secure the necessary competence. If we make an honest attempt to secure that competence by following implicitly the directions of the Śāstras and of Guru, the Lord will guide us along the path of progress, solve all our problems and doubts, free us from all worry and trouble and lead us on to the state of realisation of the Advaita Reality, the truth and the bliss of the absolute oneness of all in the undifferentiated Brahman.

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT WORDS

ĀCHĀRA: Right conduct.

ĀCHĀRYA: A spiritual guide, one who has mastered the codes of āchāra (right conduct), observes them himself and makes others observe them properly.

ADHARMA: Conduct opposed to Dharma; action prohibited by the Śāstras.

ADHAVĀ: A woman without husband.

ADHIKĀRA: Competency, necessary qualification requisite for a particular course of study or practice.

ĀDITYA: The Sun God, son of Aditi.

ADRISHṬA: Literally, unseen. Particularly applied to the unseen store of past Karma which is beyond our vision till it manifests itself.

ADVAITA: Literally, non-dual. The name is applied to the system of thought known as non-dualism propounded in the Upanishads and expounded by Śrī Śankarāchārya.

AGNIHOTRA: The daily sacrifice in fire enjoined by the Vedas.

ĀNANDA: Bliss.

ANTARYĀMI: The inner Ruler. The name applied to the Godhead when conceived of as controlling the entire universe from within.

ANUMĀNA: The process of reasoning, inference.

ANVAYA: The method of reasoning by which we deduce the relationship of cause and effect between two things by perceiving that the existence of one of them is invariably preceded by the existence of the other.

ASTIKA: One who grants the existence of 1. God, 2. Other regions of experience and 3. Other births than the present one.

ASTIKYAM: The state of being an Āstika, a believer.

BHAJANA: Generally, worship. Particularly applied to a set of devotional exercises usually accompanied by music.

BHAKTA: A devotee.

BHAKTI: Devotion.

BHRAMA: Misconception, illusion, wrong knowledge.

BHASMA: Sacred ashes.

BRAHMĀ: The name given to the Absolute when viewed as the creator of the universe. He is conceived of in devotional literature as having his special abode in the region known as Satya Loka.

BRAHMACHARYA: Studentship, primarily for the study of the Vedas.

BRAHMAN: The Ultimate Reality whose essential characteristics are absolute existence, absolute consciousness and absolute bliss and which transcends all limitations.

BRĀHMAṆA: A member of the class of that name among the four main classes into which Hindu society is classified in the Śāstras, namely Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra.

BRĀHMAṆYAM: The spiritual status of a Brāhmaṇa.

BRAHMANANDA: The bliss of the Absolute Self.

CHĀRVĀKA: Literally, sweet-tongued. A materialist according to whom this body is the Self, its gratification the goal of life and its dissolution salvation.

CHIT: Consciousness, intelligent principle.

CHIT-ŚAKTI: Consciousness-energy, intelligence cum force.

- DEVA:** Literally, a shining one, a celestial being (masculine).
- DEVATĀ:** Same as Deva or Devī.
- DEVĪ:** Literally, a shining one, a celestial being (feminine).
- DHARMA:** The essential or ordained function, duty as enjoined in the Scriptures. Generally, the law governing or regulating conduct.
- DHARMIKA:** One who conforms to Dharma in his conduct.
- DVIBHASHĪ:** Literally, able to speak two languages. Corrupted into Dubāsh. A person who can act as an interpreter between two persons who do not understand each other's language.
- GAṆEŚA:** The God of learning.
- GOPICHANDANA:** A special kind of light yellow mud, sacred to Viṣṇu.
- HIRAṆYAGARBHA:** The name given to the first born, that is, the being that comes into existence at the beginning of creation and who enlivens and ensouls the entire universe.
- ĪŚVARA:** The Absolute Reality viewed in its relative aspect as the Lord of the universe.
- JĪVA:** The individual soul by whose presence the body is said to live.
- JÑĀNA:** Knowledge. Particularly, the knowledge of the Absolute Reality leading to freedom from phenomenal life.
- KALIYUGA:** The present Hindu era, said to have begun about 3100 B.C.
- KĀMA:** Desire. Particularly, desire for sense gratification.

KANYĀ: An unmarried girl.

KARMA: Action. Specially, responsible action, good or evil. The name is also applied to the unseen effect of action already done which is awaiting manifestation.

KĀRMIC: Pertaining to Karma.

LOBHA: Miserliness. Disinclination to part with what one has, sometimes used also to signify the longing for what one has not. Greed.

LOKA: Region of experience, a world.

LOUKIKA: A worldly person.

MAYĀ: The inscrutable power of Brahman responsible for all diversity. The differentiating principle conceived of as the power inherent in the Absolute.

MOKSHA: Literally, release. Freedom from all bondage, that is, final liberation leading to the state of unlimited existence, unlimited consciousness and unlimited bliss.

MĀTHA: A place where a sannyāsin (recluse) resides. A monastery in general.

NĀSTIKA: One who denies the existence of all the following 1. God, 2. Other regions of experience and 3. Other births than the present one.

NIRGUṆA: Free from attributes.

NISHKĀMA-KARMA: Action without desire for a particular effect.

OUPANISHADA: Enunciated only in the Upanishads.

PRADHĀNA: Prime material substance which is said to have been the cause of the universe.

PRAMĀ: Right perception.

- PRAMAṆA:** The means of right knowledge.
- PRATYAKSHA:** Direct perception by the senses.
- RISHI:** A sage who has attained the power to visualise the past and the future.
- ŚABDA:** Literally, sound. The word is used to denote the means of knowledge other than direct perception and reasoning. The authoritative word and, particularly, the Vedas and the Holy Scriptures dependent thereon.
- SAGUṆA:** With attributes.
- ŚAKTA:** One who has power.
- ŚAKTI:** Power.
- SĀMĀNYA:** Ordinary, general.
- SAMIT:** Sacred twigs used for sacrifices.
- SAMSKĀRA:** Spiritual purification. Sacramental ceremony. Purificatory rite.
- SANĀTANA:** Ever-existing, eternal.
- SANDHYĀ:** Literally, what is in the junction. Usually applied to 1. Dawn, the junction between night and day, 2. Noon, the junction between forenoon and afternoon, 3. Sunset, the junction between day and night. The word is derivatively applied to the oblations, prayers and worships which have to be offered at these times.
- SARIT:** A flowing stream.
- ŚĀSTRA:** Literally, that which enjoins or commands. The name is applied to the Holy Scriptures which prescribe duties.
- ŚĀSYA:** That which is commanded.
- ŚIVA:** The name given to the Absolute when viewed as the dissolver of the universe. He is conceived of in devotional literature as having his special abode in the region known as Kailāsa.

SMRITI: Code of laws promulgated by the ancient sages for the guidance of mankind in accordance with the Vedas.

SOMA: A special kind of herb used for extracting juice for oblation in Vedic sacrifice.

SOMA YĀGA: The Vedic sacrifice in which Soma predominates.

ŚRADDHĀ: Faith. Belief in the truth of the Holy Scriptures and the words of the Spiritual Guru (Master).

SUBRAHMANYA: The God in commandment of the armies of the Gods.

SULKA: Money or money's worth paid as a fee.

SŪRYA: The Sun God.

SVABHAVA: One's nature. The resultant of past deeds and tendencies carried over to this life at birth itself.

SVADHARMA: The duty enjoined on one's self by the Śāstras.

TARKA: The science of logic.

TĀRKIKA: A logician.

UPANAYANA: Literally, taking near. The initiation ceremony done for the boys of the twice-born castes among the Hindus to qualify them for the study of the Vedas.

UPANISHAD: The last portion of the Vedas generally dealing with the ultimate truth of things.

UPĀSANĀ: Literally, sitting near. One-pointed devotion.

UPĀSYA: The object of devotion.

UPĀSYA DEVATĀ: The particular God who is the object of devotion.

VAIDIKA: One who has studied the Vedas and regulates his conduct according to them.

VARA: A bridegroom.

VARA-SULKA: The fee paid to secure a bridegroom.

VĀSANA: The resultant tendency left by an action or an experience which generates the taste for or facilitates further action or experience of the same sort. Facility or taste.

VĀSANA-SARIT: A stream of tendencies.

VEDA: The primary Holy Scriptures of the Hindus believed to be eternal.

VEDĀNTA: Literally, the last portion of Vedas namely the Upanishads. Derivatively, the philosophy enunciated therein.

VIDHAVĀ: A woman who has lost her husband.

VIDYĀ: Knowledge.

VIŚEṢHA: Special, particular.

VISHṆU: The name given to the Absolute when viewed as the sustainer of the universe. He is conceived of in devotional literature as having his special abode in the region known as Vaikuṇṭha.

VIVĀHA: Sacrament of marriage.

VYATIREKA: The method of reasoning by which we deduce the relationship of cause and effect between two things by perceiving that the non-existence of the one is invariably preceded by the non-existence of the other.

YĀGA: Sacrificial worship ordained in the Śāstras.

सुमुख भवन वेद वेदाङ्ग पुस्तकालय

वा रा ग सी ।

अज्ञात क्रमांक..... 1417

दिनांक.....

